

United
Churches
and the
Ecumenical
Movement

**CALLED
TO
BE
ONE
IN
CHRIST**

Edited by
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and Thomas F. Best

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: UNITED CHURCHES AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT	vii
<i>Thomas F. Best</i>	
I. "A COSTLY UNITY": THE CHALLENGE OF UNITED/UNITING CHURCHES TODAY	
United and Uniting Churches: Perspectives from the Colombo Consultation	3
<i>Paul A. Crow Jr</i>	
II. CASE STUDIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD	
A. <i>The Theology, Theory and Practice of Church Union</i>	
Church Union Negotiations and Shared Spirituality Among United/Uniting Churches	15
<i>Noel A. Davies</i>	
Some Central Issues Facing United Churches	25
<i>David Gill and Ethel Mitchell</i>	
The Importance of Union for the Local Congregation	30
<i>Gillian Bobbett</i>	
B. <i>Unity and Renewal: United Churches as Agents of Mission and Reconciliation</i>	
The Search for Unity in a Divided Nation	34
<i>Wesley Ariarajah</i>	
A New Church in a New Nation	37
<i>D.M. Musunsa</i>	

Church Union and the Healing of Society.	40
<i>David W.A. Taylor</i>	
The Challenge of Mutual Recognition among United Churches	45
<i>Reinhard Groscurth</i>	
C. <i>United Churches and the Question of Church-State Relations</i>	
The Relationship of United Churches to the State . . .	53
<i>Keiji Ogawa</i>	
D. <i>On the Way: Churches in Quest of Union</i>	
Interim Eucharistic Fellowship.	58
<i>Gerald F. Moede</i>	
The Importance of Education for Church Union . . .	63
<i>Laurence A. Creedy</i>	
III. APPENDICES	
Church Union Negotiations: a Narrative Bibliography . .	73
CONTRIBUTORS	78

INTRODUCTION: UNITED CHURCHES AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

THOMAS F. BEST

In this work we seek to capture something of the vision, hopes, and achievements, something of the problems and failures, of the united and the uniting churches movement over the past eighty years. While the book had its origin in a specific consultation of united and uniting churches, the issues raised are general ones, and form a sound introduction to this fascinating and important part of global Christianity.

It is hoped the emphasis upon case studies will make the material more concrete and specific. For these are questions which must be addressed by all the people of God, not just a small circle of professional theologians or "ecumaniacs". We suspect that Christians in many different churches—and not only "united" ones—and of many different backgrounds and persuasions, will relate to at least some of the problems raised in these studies. With this in mind we begin with a general introduction to united and uniting churches, and their place within the ecumenical movement as a whole, as a kind of "road map" for beginners.

What is a united or uniting church?

What, then, is a united church, and how does it differ from the more familiar groups such as Anglican, Lutheran or Baptist? The problem of definition is notorious in this field, but in general we would expect to find in a united church the following features:

1. It has its own particular theology, ministry, structures of authority and decision-making—in other words it is a "church", a distinct confessional body.

2. It has been formed from two or more confessional bodies which were previously separate entities—in other words, it is the product of a specific act of “union” among churches.
3. It understands itself as something different from, and more than, the sum of its parts—in other words it is a “new creation”, not merely the merging of elements from its parent traditions.
4. It understands Christian unity, expressed structurally in some way as well as theologically, as a fundamental and pressing demand of the faith.
5. It tends to have been formed within national boundaries, and often identifies itself in this way.
6. It tends to have been formed from churches which were not dominant within their own cultures.
7. It has often developed from churches of the Reformed tradition, churches which are less “liturgical” in worship and which have non-episcopal structures of governance.

From this it follows that a “uniting church” is one in active union negotiations with another church or churches—seeking at least some elements of structural union, not only theological clarification or joint mission programming, etc. Sometimes the vision of the churches confounds those who like to systematize: the name “The Uniting Church in Australia”, eight years now *after* union, witnesses that union is a continuing process and seeks to become yet more inclusive. And there are united churches whose name includes neither the word “united” nor “uniting” (such as the Church of South India).

Naturally there are striking and important exceptions to the above seven “features” of united churches. The Evangelical Church of the Union exists both in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the German Democratic Republic (though here there is clearly a cultural bond across differing political systems); the Church of North India incorporates bishops from its Anglican and Methodist parent bodies; the Episcopal Church in America is active in the Consultation on Church Union there. And of course various features may be more or less prominent at a given point in the life of a united church. At the time of union, for example, the consciousness of unity as a demand of the gospel is very high; it may seem less important later on, as members become comfortable with “our” church and reluctant to enter “yet another” union.

A further difficulty is the uncertain distinction between transconfessional and interconfessional unions. The joining of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, and the Presbyterian Church in the US, to form the Presbyterian Church (USA), occurred in 1983. This was an ecumenical—and social—event of the highest significance. But

does it form a “united church” in the same way as did the joining of Anglicans, Baptists, Church of the Brethren, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Methodists, and an already-united church in the Church of North India in 1970? These American Presbyterians, at any rate, insisted that they were shaping a “reunion” rather than a union or merger in the usual sense.

Such questions make it difficult if not impossible to give a definitive list of united churches. Already in 1971 an expert could identify 57 “more significant” unions which had been consummated since 1925, involving 164 churches in 28 countries—not to mention the 31 union discussions then in progress among 116 churches, with 45 million members, in 25 countries.¹ A more cautious estimate in 1978 counted some 30 transconfessional unions, involving 12 million members, and more than 30 union discussions under way.² Clearly it is foolish to be dogmatic here.

Still, our list enables us to say what united churches are not: they are not large, worldwide confessional bodies with varying degrees of centralization (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran), nor global associations of denominations (Methodist, Baptist), or autocephalous churches (Orthodox). And they are not generally the “established” churches of their societies, whether in a political or more general, social sense.

These negative points, together with the fact that a specific personal and institutional decision had to be taken, within the recent past, to form the church, give many of the united churches a distinctive self-understanding. Above all they tend to think of themselves as “intentional”: their church has claimed its own identity given from God through the Holy Spirit, they have given up the comfortable past to reach for something new, they have experienced the “dying in order to live” that is the mark of the Christian life, whether of an individual or of a church.

United and uniting churches within the ecumenical movement

A. Their relation to the Christian World Communions

It is here that questions arise about the relationship of united churches to other Christian groups, in particular the Christian World Communions. These are the worldwide “confessional families” characterized by long tradition, a relatively coherent theology and, in some cases, centralized authority. A major development in global Christianity, particularly since the Second Vatican Council, has been the astonishing proliferation of discussions between such Communions: between Anglicans and Orthodox, Lutherans and Anglicans, Orthodox and Reformed, between Rome and all of the above,

and many more. The supposed "slowing down" of the ecumenical movement is really this third-generation phenomenon: the ecumenical imperative is now taken seriously by almost all confessional families, and the prophetic impatience of the visionary has to wait upon the infinitely slower and more tedious business of official negotiations.

These are usually carried on between two partners, and hence are called "bilateral dialogues". At least at their present stage they focus on theological differences, mutual recognition of ministries, possibilities of common work, etc.—questions of co-existence rather than federation, much less union, of the parties involved. This contrasts with discussions leading to a united church, which typically involve more than two parties (and are therefore called "multilaterals"), and which have union as their explicit goal. The Christian World Communions loom very large on the stage of world Christianity, and the issues between them tend to be fundamental to the historic divisions among the churches. It is not surprising, therefore, that some feel that the bilateral achievements have come to overshadow the work and witness of united churches. One of the urgent tasks is to integrate the witness of both types of dialogues within the overall ecumenical movement. There are encouraging signs in this direction, such as the invitation extended to united/uniting churches to send observers to the periodic forums on bilateral discussions.

B. Their relation to the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC

This raises the question of the worldwide structure of the united churches movement. In fact there is no "confessional family" for united churches analogous to that for Anglicans, Lutherans, or even Methodists or Disciples. While such a structure could help focus the united church movement, it has always been resisted by the united churches themselves as simply creating another "global denomination". It would be, in short, the refutation of their original purpose in forming a united church, and a witness against Christian unity.

Over the years a relationship has developed between various united churches and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. Faith and Order is mandated by its constitution to examine fundamental issues in the search for Christian unity; it is inevitable that it should have a special interest in those churches which have actually achieved a united status. It has been privileged to provide, to a limited extent, some of the "networking" functions of a more formal united church organization such as sharing information and promoting the exchange of ideas through newsletters. Faith and Order has published a biennial survey of church union negotiations which goes back, in some form, almost fifty years and forms an important documentary history of the movement (for information on

this see the bibliography at the end of this book). And with regard to the larger ecumenical scene, Faith and Order is in a position to help united churches and Christian World Communions relate to each other, as the parties desire and without impinging upon the "sovereignty" of either one. But Faith and Order is specifically not mandated, nor does it wish, to promote particular church mergers; these are the business of the churches concerned.

Finally, Faith and Order has organized a series of consultations on united and uniting churches to enable face-to-face sharing of experience and resources. These have been held at Bossey (1967), Limuru (1970), Toronto (1975), and Colombo (1981). The keynote papers from the meeting in 1981, by Martin Cressey and Lakshman Wickremesinghe, have already been published in the Report,³ the case studies presented at that consultation form the heart of the present volume. To this we now turn.

Case studies from Colombo: an overview of the volume

The first paper, by Paul A. Crow, Jr, offer perspectives on the Colombo consultation; it is based on reflections presented to the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting in Lima (1982), and is probably the best general review of the present situation among united and uniting churches available. Its particular strength lies in siting these churches within the ecumenical movement as a whole, and relating their quest to the broader issues such as unity and renewal, "competitive ecumenism", the growing emphasis upon spirituality, and the tension between unity and mission. Here is the vision, the challenge to—and from—these churches.

The remaining papers, with one exception, were presented originally as case studies at the Colombo consultation. Each author was asked to reflect upon some aspect of the life of united or uniting churches, not in the abstract but in light of specific experiences in his or her local situation. Colombo sought to be "contextual" in its theological study.

Noel Davies's paper emphasizes the importance of shared spiritual life among churches in process of uniting. Without this a union, however perfect in organizational and bureaucratic terms, is superficial and perhaps does more harm than good: there may be no intrinsic value in merely substituting one structure for two, without an accompanying inner growth and renewal. The papers from Australia and England examine some practical aspects of dealing with shared life in the church, the first from the national level, the second squarely from the perspective of a local church.

One claim made by proponents of church union is that it enables more effective witness and service in face of the problems of the world. This is tested in terms of intranational tensions in contributions

from Sri Lanka and Zambia, and in a transcultural situation involving Germany and the United States. In addition this section includes one paper not originally presented in Colombo, David Taylor's report on the reunion of the two major Presbyterian bodies within the United States. This was specially written for this volume following the consummation of the reunion in 1983.

The witness of the united church within its culture is further explored in light of church-state tensions in Japan. Here one should recall that this united church was formed as a direct result of governmental pressure, creating a union which served the interests of the state rather than growing from the life and convictions of the church itself.

The final essays reflect unions not yet consummated. Each deals with a specific problem faced, in one way or another, by all churches which pursue union plans. The first is the question of the "interim period" between the commitment to union, and its practical realization. This is particularly difficult in fields such as common worship life and recognition of ministries. One approach to the problem of eucharistic fellowship is shared from the Consultation on Church Union of the USA. In the number of church bodies involved, and the number of members represented, this is perhaps the most ambitious union scheme yet devised. The final case study offers Laurence Creedy's reflections on the vital importance of education at all levels of the church as a preparation for union. The difficulties which many union schemes are currently experiencing, as well as the problems of some second- and third-generation unions, underline the value of his remarks.

Finally, a bibliography has been added for those seeking further information. It lists some of the basic reference works and series of articles devoted to this field.

Naturally no single volume can include everything of importance. Probably the most significant omission is a sustained treatment of the problem of united church structure. We see now, even more clearly than in 1981, that this is not only an obvious concern for uniting churches as they look to the future, but is likely to be a problem of second- and third-generation united churches as well. If there is a fifth consultation of united and uniting churches, as has been proposed for 1987, it should concentrate on the question of "models"—that is, what kind of church union is sought, and what structures will express this most adequately? Like the meeting organized by Faith and Order in Salamanca in 1973, this should include representatives of Christian World Communions.

* * *

It remains only to explain the origin of the current book and the division of labour in its preparation. The Colombo meeting was

planned by Michael Kinnamon, then on the staff of Faith and Order, who is responsible for the selection of case studies and the initial concept of the book. I have completed the editorial work and am responsible for the post-Colombo material, as well as for the introduction and bibliography. Both editors have worked with the material at different stages of its production. Naturally each case-study author has been given the chance to revise his or her contribution in light of recent developments.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to the preparation of this work, and offer it in the hope that it will stimulate interest, research, and involvement in the issues facing united and uniting churches today, as well as encourage the contribution which is theirs to make to the broader ecumenical movement.

NOTES

1. Gerald F. Moede, "Kirchenunionen in den siebziger Jahren", in *Kirchenunionen und Kirchengemeinschaft*, ed. Reinhard Groscurth, Frankfurt, Verlag Lembeck, 1971, pp. 9-24, see p. 9.
2. Martin H. Cressey, "The Concept of Organic Unity as it has Motivated Church Unions," *Mid-Stream*, 17, 1978, pp. 367-73, see p. 367.
3. Growing Towards Consensus and Commitment, *Faith and Order Paper No. 110*, Geneva, WCC, 1981.

I

**"A COSTLY UNITY":
THE CHALLENGE OF
UNITED/UNITING CHURCHES TODAY**

UNITED AND UNITING CHURCHES: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE COLOMBO CONSULTATION

PAUL A. CROW, JR

Within the one ecumenical movement there is a distinctive series of international consultations which gathers representatives of united churches and church union negotiations (uniting churches). The first three of these consultations, convened by the WCC's Faith and Order secretariat, were held at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, Switzerland (1967), Limuru, Kenya (1970), and Toronto, Canada (1975). Each was a significant stimulus in the search for visible unity in the midst of a threatened and fragmented world.

1. Profile of the Colombo consultation

The Fourth Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 18-25 November 1981, proved to be an important event on the way to the Vancouver Assembly. It especially revealed the dynamic character of what is understood by "organic union". The consultation brought together 46 representatives from 17 united churches and 12 church union negotiations—for the first time in Asia. Represented were countries of the so-called first and second worlds—Germany (East and West), Great Britain, Canada, the USA, et al., and countries from the so-called third world—Bangladesh, Madagascar, India, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Thailand, Zambia, Ghana, and Argentina. Even more, the Colombo consultation gave evidence of a wider ecumenism as the representatives were joined by official participants from the Roman Catholic Church and—for the first time—the Orthodox churches.

Meeting in Sri Lanka, the consultation was stimulated by two notes of reality. First, our reflections on church union took place in a society

dominated by Buddhism (67 percent) and Hinduism (20 percent). The stakes are much higher on an island where the cross and the lotus flower are in constant dialogue. Second, we met in a country where proposals for a united church, once officially approved by the five church bodies, have been stalled over a decade by the lawsuits of dissident laity and by the lethargy of a new generation of ministers and lay people. This context made an intriguing case study for the consultation's agenda.

What these consultations accomplish is of decided value for united and uniting churches as well as for the whole ecumenical movement. They are occasions when united and uniting churches are able to share information, to compare their latest developments, to identify and explore their common problems, and to articulate their vision of visible church union as a sign and sacrament of the unity of humankind. Although very different in their constituent members and their cultural settings, these churches are strengthened by testing their pasts and futures together with those who have had a similar experience. Too, they often feel ignored in the World Council of Churches and the wider ecumenical movement, especially when the daily fare is preoccupation with confessionalism and when ecumenism becomes power plays by the super-churches and some Christian World Communions. The Colombo consultation was the opportunity for these reconciled communities of all shapes and colours to have a particular voice in the ecumenical movement and to share their experiences of joy and pain in the struggle for a costly unity.

2. The experiences of united churches to be shared

At Colombo these churches were humble about their partial achievements, but they brought a sense of confidence in the authority of their witness. United and uniting churches have a unique perspective on catholicity, reconciliation, and mission, a perspective which they brought with them to Colombo.

Their witness is affected, however, both by some of their limited views and by the caricatures which others project upon them. For example, united and uniting churches are sometimes thought to be Protestant in their perspectives, when in reality their ultimate goal is full catholicity. They are judged to be exercises in ecclesiastical mergers, when in reality they are searching for an ordering of the church which allows the community to proclaim the gospel and to risk itself in servant ministry to different social situations. They suffer from charges of uniformity, when in reality they are living testimonies to a unity-with-diversity which goes beyond any of the existing traditions or confessions. They are criticized as if they were dealing only with the divisions of the centuries—which still break up families, communities,

and nations—when in reality they are seeking to find justice and reconciliation in today's divisions of peoples, cultures, nations, languages, races and sexes.

As they continue to explore their vocation, united churches contribute, said Colombo, at least three profound insights to the wider ecumenical movement:

1. *Consensus and reception*: The positive experience of united churches in articulating an emerging theological and structural consensus and in achieving its reception in the churches is an open chapter in ecumenical history. For the past fifty years they have carefully and patiently led divided churches in their place to discover a common faith, anticipating what is now being achieved internationally by the WCC's study on baptism, eucharist and ministry and by the bilateral conversations. The experience of united and uniting churches—including those conversations which never achieved union—is, however, focused upon two insights in the search for consensus. First, "the search for theological, liturgical, and organizational consensus, important as it is, is not by itself sufficient for realizing unity. We have discovered that unity is equally a matter of trust that allows us to manifest our shared being in Christ despite certain divergences of belief and practice."¹ Second, the experience of church union clearly shows that "consensus" alone is insufficient and delays genuine unity until there is "commitment", a claiming of the agreements. Consensus is merely the languishing of theologians until it becomes made part of the teaching ministry of the churches.

2. *Church union and Christian identity*: Church union inevitably raises the issue of identity. From a positive angle, the prospect of church union poses the question of what spiritual presence will a united church offer to the world. From a negative side, it conjures up very real fears of "losing one's identity" in the formation of the united community.

Both the positive and negative aspects of this problem arise from the fact that Christian identity is both confessional and cultural. Our Christian identity is often related to and expressive of ethnic, cultural and national identities, as well as confessional or denominational heritages. The growth towards visible unity as experienced by united churches tells the story, however, not of the loss of this identity but its mutual enrichment. Indeed, they confess that isolated, divided traditions are the real denials of the full Christian identity.

United churches lead to a sharing and transforming of previous identities. The confessional and cultural identities are shared in a wider fellowship; but at the same time the united church becomes a testimony that the church cannot be truly confessed with its partial expressions—ethnic, cultural, national or denominational.

A uniting church discovers its own identity as it receives the heritage of various traditions and forms them into a diversity that is not simply "reconciled" or "comprehensive", but creatively integrated, a diversity which is able to learn from and incorporate a wider variety of traditions.²

Christian identity is not saved in remaining divided ecclesologically or culturally, but in transforming our identities through sharing in the Christ-filled community of faith and witness. "If it is Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2), then we can risk sharing our identity to gain new life."

3. *Visible unity in each place and all places*: Admittedly united churches express *koinonia* only within national boundaries (although new models of international unity are being expressed, e.g. the relationship of *Kirchengemeinschaft* between the United Church of Christ in the USA and the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany). However, they seek to represent the church local and the church universal in their lives. But they do not represent different unities—one local and another universal. They are expressions of the same unity given by God to God's people in Jesus Christ.

While they long for the time when Christians in *all places* shall be united, the experience of united and uniting churches makes real the fact that unity is incomplete unless it involves all Christians in *each place*. Thus Colombo said: "We long for the time when all Christians in each place can fully express the fact that they belong together in Christ, are responsible for one another, and are under obligation to make *together* the decisions which direct their working, their witness, and their service." In this sense the united local church is a blossoming of the universal church.

3. Second generation issues

The Colombo consultation gave evidence of new issues which now confront united churches and church union conversations. For united churches these "second generation issues" represent the continuing struggle for unity after union, an experience not always anticipated by those who led and gave guidance to the uniting process. For church union negotiations the "second generation issues" are an encounter to live out the apostolic call by dealing with new church-dividing issues or forms of alienation and brokenness in the world, and to discover new models of church union required. In both instances, as Colombo revealed, these issues are expanding our vision of what a united church is and can become.

1. *Church union and the renewal of the human community*: United and uniting churches have come to face with more intensity the issue of the renewal of the human community, not only in response to the worldwide ecumenical movement but in response to their existential situation. Therefore, Colombo declared: "Any future unity across

confessional boundaries would be belied by continuing barriers and forms of discrimination within the community of the church and the world."

Colombo defined united and uniting churches as those on a journey towards "an incarnate, realized ecumenism that cuts across the barriers of confession, nationality, race, culture, sex, and class". While this ecumenism has yet to be realized completely in any situation, this declares both the perspective and the concrete action required if these attempts are to become visible manifestations of Christ's one body. In the USA the ten-church Consultation on Church Union is moving towards community and equality between black and white Christians. In Sri Lanka the conversations towards church union offer the only viable prospect of peace across the racial and cultural hostilities which separate the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The Kyodan in Japan lives its union in the midst of sharp tensions and polarized views of Christian involvement in the social order. The Uniting Church of Australia is the community which is seeking to reverse the rejection of the Aborigines in the society. In the USA and Zambia and elsewhere church union means the search for patterns of community which enable women and men to become full partners in ministry, mission and service, and in common decision-making.

To speak of the unity of the church in the context of the renewal of the human community forces us to pursue new images of a united church. At the same time, this context brings visible church unity, newly conceived, to the fore with a more vital urgency. Simply put: a divided church contributes to a world divided by oppression and injustice and poverty. If this seems far-fetched, we have only to notice how the same factors which divide the church (power, privilege, status, protection of "our" tradition) are the same factors which help some people to rest comfortably with a society of hunger, poverty, and injustice. A part of the hope of the gospel for the world is a church whose sacramental presence and solidarity with the alienated and oppressed is a sign of the unity God gives to all people.

2. *A wider and deeper ecclesiology*: The Colombo consultation described the fundamental developments among uniting churches in recent years as "growing towards a deeper understanding of the church". This broader vision of the church is incarnated when the dialogue and eventual ecclesial fellowship encompass not only the usual partners of church union (Protestants and Anglicans), but the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches, and the Pentecostal churches. This wider and deeper ecclesiology comes as Christian community flows from the interaction between our confessional traditions and the cultural and social situations to which we are called to witness.

Colombo, as did Nairobi in its vision of "conciliar fellowship", affirmed as the future goal the necessity of "local churches truly united", that is, churches living in eucharistic community in the world and claiming responsibility for each other. As we pursue that goal we have come to see the interim character of many of our steps towards local unity, even organic union when it fails to manifest the full unity of all Christians in each place. Yet we have come to see the spiritual power of many of those interim steps—organic union, covenanting joint councils, et al., to give Christians a foretaste of the ultimate unity to which God calls them. This fact requires us to explore these models in light of their witness in different contexts. We must clearly show they are not competitive but can in creative interaction become critical steps in different contexts towards the unity which presents Christ to a broken and divided world.

3. *Unity and spirituality*: United and uniting churches identify spirituality, "that gift of God through his Spirit which enables us to perceive the wholeness of all things being gathered up into unity in Christ", as the ultimate clue to the unity of the church and the renewal of human community. Only such a spirituality can release the power and the patience to confront the issues of division; only such spirituality can empower the churches to risk their lives in the service of a broken humanity; only such a spirituality gives us the perspective to discern the most appropriate models of a united church.

Colombo gave definite qualities to this spirituality. It is a spirituality (a) which moves Christian people towards unity "so that the world may be"; (b) which takes us more fully into the mystery of the unity of the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit; (c) which is "directed towards the wholeness of living and loving", which means living prophetically in the divisiveness of the world. Such a spirituality holds together "prophetic witness amid injustice and oppression (a witness which often leads to deep conflicts and divisions in the church) and the forgiveness of God which releases the church for the costly mission that is God's call". Such a "spirituality for combat" (David Jenkins) is often given in the midst of struggle as united and uniting churches seek for genuine Christian community in that place and as they celebrate the eucharist, the eschatological meal, together in the joy and conflict of their life on earth.

4. New threats to unity

Facing the call to visible unity in this new context may bring the churches to new dimensions of faithfulness. Or it may lead to judgments and decisions which represent new acts of unfaithfulness. In the latter instance, the representatives at Colombo lifted up three threats to true unity which stand on the horizon.

1. *The dichotomy between unity and mission*: No one stands more as of a denial of ecumenism than those—from the theological right and left—who make mission or unity the priority by minimizing the centrality of the other.

We have gathered in Colombo keenly aware of the momentous problems of our world—widespread hunger and poverty, daily evidence of oppression and social injustices, deepening alienations among people, the threat of nuclear war. Our awareness of human brokenness and our experience of church union lead us to affirm that union and mission are both authentic marks of the Church, inseparable responses to the same Gospel. The attempt by some to create a dichotomy between mission and union ... betrays a false understanding of the nature of the Church and its mission. Mission includes not only preaching the Word but also living the Word in response to the Gospel; it means service to those in need and solidarity with the poor and oppressed. We affirm that union can serve as an impetus for this kind of mission and as a sign for the renewal of human community.³

And yet in public pronouncements and silent assumptions many Christians enforce this dichotomy and thus weaken the ecumenical character of their witness.

2. *Competitive ecumenism*: Within the concept of the one ecumenical movement the various approaches to visible unity are viewed as complementary. Yet in recent years one can observe a choosing of sides within the churches. Colombo charged the churches with "competitive ecumenism", or what Yves Congar calls "the spectre of a parallel ecumenism". This is particularly true in relation to church union and bilateral dialogues. They are interpreted as alternatives, setting up for pastors, priests, and theologians as well as for lay people an attitude of competition between the two. Colombo's message tries to reverse this tendency, establishing them as expressions of complementary, not competitive, ecumenism. Calling for "dynamic links" between multi-lateral church union conversations and the bilateral dialogues (Roman Catholic-Anglican, Roman Catholic-Lutheran, Roman Catholic-Disciples of Christ, et al.), Colombo spoke the clear word:

We believe the time has come for representatives of united and uniting churches and bilateral conversations to share their experiences... Our two approaches can strengthen each other and thus support the common task of helping divided churches to confess their one Lord in the world.⁴

3. *Paternalism in mission and unity*: United and uniting churches at Colombo spoke of a continued paternalism of American and European churches and some Christian World Communions which divides churches in the third world. Some of these patterns of paternalism are intentional, others are unintentional. Their severest expression takes place when dependency is maintained or when the

fear of losing western funds causes churches in a particular country not to enter a united church. They prefer Lutheran or Methodist or whatever resources to a common eucharist and missional life with other churches in their land. Even loyalty to certain doctrines can be an expression of western control.

Clearly the Colombo report touches the major issues confronting the churches in their ecumenical calling—reception of our emerging consensus, the renewal of human community, the community of women and men, the expression of a common ministry and sacramental life.

5. Colombo's recommendations

The full list of the consultation's recommendations to united and uniting churches and to the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order can be found in the report.⁵ Five recommendations have particular significance in grasping the fruits of the Colombo consultation:

1. United and uniting churches now commit themselves to a broader view of church union, especially encouraging wider contact with traditions not normally involved in church union negotiations, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox churches, and Pentecostal churches.
2. The pursuit of a united and uniting church must be made in the context of the renewal of the human community.
3. Special concentration should be made on education for ecumenism, especially those patterns of education which recognize that "the fear of change" is a primary obstacle to a united church.
4. Faith and Order is asked to convene, after the Vancouver Assembly (1983), a conference of united and uniting churches and bilateral dialogues, and to encourage other ways to put these two approaches into fruitful complementary interaction.
5. Colombo authorized Faith and Order to accelerate its facilitation of conversations among united churches and church union negotiations, to heighten their visible participation in the ecumenical movement, and to assist them in their search for fuller unity.

6. Conclusion

A final word. Colombo was a meeting of churches with a unique Christian existence. They are churches who have experienced the costly unity of dying to themselves. They are signs of the gospel teaching that those who participate in Christ do so through the cross. But it was a death in order to receive a fuller, reconciled life.

It is this holy dynamic of death and resurrection which is the heart of the ecumenical movement, if it is to be more than an eternal Faith and Order conference.

NOTES

* The author was co-moderator of the Colombo consultation of united and uniting churches. This article appeared in *Mid-Stream*, Vol. 21, 1982.

1. Growing Towards Consensus and Commitment, report of the fourth consultation of united and uniting churches, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1981, *Faith and Order Paper No. 110*, Geneva, WCC, 1981, p.2.
2. *Ibid.*, p.17.
3. *Ibid.*, p.3.
4. *Ibid.*, p.21.
5. *Ibid.*, pp.31–33.

II

CASE STUDIES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

CHURCH UNION NEGOTIATIONS AND SHARED SPIRITUALITY AMONG UNITING/UNITED CHURCHES

NOEL A. DAVIES

Why raise the question?

There are at least four reasons.

Firstly, unity is primarily fellowship in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is "the reflection in the life of the Church of the triune being of God... The source of the Church's unity... is the meeting of the Apostles with the risen Lord who bears the marks of his cross, and the continued encounter of the disciples today with his living presence in the midst of the eucharistic fellowship. He brings its members into the communion of the Holy Spirit and makes them children of the Father."¹ It is therefore about anticipatory communities grounded in the love of God. This sets spirituality at the centre of the quest for unity.

Secondly, unity is a Pentecostal experience, it is an adventure in the Holy Spirit before it becomes a quest for agreements and consensus. Fr Tillard said (quoted by Cardinal Suenens): "...our primary ecumenical approach must be... our common spiritual encounter." And its goal is doxology.

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ, have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

(Eph. 1:9-12)

Thirdly, for unity to be truly the unity of all Christians it must be rooted in people's primary experience of church in the worship, liturgical and prayer life of the community.

"Programmatically unity should start not with theology but with people being involved in a process of contact, through common worship and witness."²

Finally, it is becoming increasingly clear that the slow progress towards unity between the covenanted churches in Wales is not primarily because there are theological sticking points; it is not due to disagreement about what needs to be done, but rather because of a fundamental lack of will at all levels of the churches' life:

Ultimately, this is a matter of faith... There is a fundamental need for growth in spirituality, deepening of community in prayer and Bible study and a greater discernment of the theological motives for the search for unity...³

How do we rekindle hope and urgency at a time of deep-rooted disillusionment about the achievement and the potential of the movement towards unity? How can we be enabled to hold the vision of unity before the world at a time of increasing crisis? How can we hold together a dynamic growth in common spirituality and the process of negotiating consensus agreements?

What is spirituality?

For our purposes we may define spirituality as that gift of God through God's Spirit which enables us to perceive the wholeness of all things being gathered up into a unity in Christ. This is a very wide and all-embracing definition of spirituality which springs from our doctrine of the incarnation; it is fundamentally Christocentric (Christ is the heart of it): "God with us" at all points of individual and communal living and experience.

The experience of the ecumenical movement in enabling churches together to face up to the great social, economic and ideological challenges of our time is teaching us that the unity Christ wills for his church is in order to serve as an anticipation and instrument of harmony among the whole human family. In all this, spirituality shares in the growth of Christians into an even fuller, richer apprehension of the purpose of Christ in his creation. Prayer shares in Christ's wholeness, is directed towards the wholeness of human living and loving that he exemplified, and is already, this side of the final kingdom, an expression of a commitment that embraces the things of today into the horizons of eternity.⁴

The church as sign

Such an understanding of spirituality becomes a plea for integrity, for wholeness in the life, mission and worship of the church. David Gill has described the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Vancouver as "an Assembly of reintegration". One of the key factors was the renewed emphasis on the church as sign, affirmed in Uppsala but given new priority at Vancouver. Mary Tanner spoke about the church as sign in her paper on unity and renewal:

The Church must take its identity from the God in whom it seeks to live, the triune God whose nature and being mysteriously allows for unity and diversity. The identity of the sign becomes sure only as the Church finds its unity in the fellowship of the Son with the Father into which the Holy Spirit takes it (John 17:21). The Church is only an authentic sign to the world when, overcoming brokenness and division, it allows itself to be drawn into and enfolded in the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and discovers its true identity.⁵

Thus a call was issued that a programme on the unity of the church and the renewal of human community should include a theological exploration of the church as "sign".

United and uniting churches need constantly to reflect upon their role as "sign" in worship and mission of what the church is being enabled to become: a sign of the future unity-in-diversity of humanity.

Practical dimensions of the issue

Common spirituality and cultural diversity

How do united and uniting churches develop a common spirituality which seeks to hold together in a common experience of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit both the commonness and the diversity of the cultural, social and political richness and challenges of their churches, communities, peoples and nations? Specifically, this means Christian spirituality. In this search, it is essential to recognize the importance of cultural diversity as it affects spirituality. Christian identity, we contend, grows out of a complex inter-relationship of national, ethnic and cultural identity and our common life in Christ expressed in terms of both a confessional heritage and the particular heritage of the Christian community in each place. Christian identity should thus not be viewed as static, closed, "given", but as open and dynamic. Such identity continues to grow through the relationship with surrounding communities and, in this way, contributes a particular richness to the worldwide Christian fellowship. For example, we have to recognize in Wales that the cultural, social and political richness which gathers around the Welsh language differs in many respects from that which gathers around the English language in Wales. The ecumenical

task—and it is a possible major contribution of covenanting for union in Wales, since it brings together English- and Welsh-speaking churches—is to comprehend and gather up this diversity of spirituality rather than perpetuate their separation and weave from it a pattern through which all grow and are enriched. And where the Welsh language is under threat, as it is generally, it is both a difficult and yet an absolutely essential task, not only in itself but also because it points to that larger community of Welsh-speaking and English-speaking people within the one nation of Wales.

But in many countries and communities (in Britain as elsewhere) there is a wider dimension. For this exploration of a (Christocentric) common spirituality must be shared with people of other living faiths. With them also we must seek to discover those points of discernment and revelation which can lead us all to celebrate together in our plural and multifaith communities the wholeness of all things. So uniting churches are particularly called—as they seek an authentic spirituality focused on Christ—to see dialogue and community with people of other living faiths as an essential element in their becoming “fellowships of anticipation”.

New forms and patterns of worship and mission

1. *Local ecumenical projects* provide an invaluable source of experience and information; here is a variety of models of experiment, openness and diversity which express both the centrality of mutual acceptance and the faith which enables Christians to live with a fundamental vulnerability. A local ecumenical project may be said to exist “where two or more churches have decided to work together as if they are well on the way towards full union”. Here are Christian communities which have pioneered in the ecumenical pilgrimage with considerable imagination. In particular, considerable energy is devoted to the task of mission in and for their community. Spirituality, mission and community are being brought together in these projects (especially on new housing estates) in a particularly creative and hopeful way.

2. *Partnership between black-led and white-led churches in Britain* (e.g. within British Council of Churches, within local councils of churches and in a joint course of theological education): In many inner city areas throughout Britain, where racial tension, economic and social deprivation create (potentially and actually) explosive situations, this growing bond between black and white led churches is of the greatest significance. It is significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, it offers the possibility of mutual enrichment as each is opened up to new and renewing expressions and experiences of spirituality. Secondly, this growth in community within the church also points to

the possibility of new community, new partnership and unity, more generally within that neighbourhood or city. Through shared spirituality the churches point to a new kind of society, and so also open up the possibility of a deeper unity between churches.

The inter-relationship between spirituality and structures must be noted. One of the major contributions of local ecumenical projects is that they have led to a new examination of church structures which is beginning to develop patterns of church government and decision-making which both match more appropriately the needs of local mission and also point to what a united church could be like at local and other levels. The diversity of the Christian churches in Britain is increasing, for example, with the emergence of the black-led churches, but it is there also on the world scale in the independent churches of Africa and the Pentecostal churches and basic communities of Latin America. There is, in fact, a constantly changing kaleidoscope of church life and Christian existence. The assumption that we can achieve one church through processes of church union may only be plausible so long as we ignore the rich Christian life which is constantly emerging and is refusing to take traditional forms.

New partnership between women and men

It has been emphasized throughout this paper that we must hold together renewed spirituality, new patterns of community partnerships and the movement towards local church union. The whole debate about the community of women and men addresses each of these dimensions most eloquently and is a particularly clear illustration of their essential inter-relatedness.

The Sheffield consultation on “The Community of Women and Men in the Church” sought to address issues which are the direct concern of this consultation: How do we develop patterns and expressions of spirituality, not least in terms of language, which enable women and men to share fully with one another their partial experiences of and continual search for an authentic faith in the triune God; how do united and uniting churches envision the ministry of the church in such a way that both women and men are enabled to respond with equal fullness to God’s call to ministry; how do united and uniting churches develop structures of decision-making which allow women and men to be full partners in Christ; what part can united churches play in helping churches for whom these questions pose particular difficulties to find new approaches to them? And all this because we believe that the working out of such new patterns of community in the church points to a vision of new community within society at large.

The period since the Sheffield consultation has helped us to understand the importance of the study programme on the

"Community of Women and Men in the Church", not as a sectional interest, but as enabling insights about the wholeness of the life and worship of the whole church. "Only an inclusive community of faith, returning again and again to its sources, will see new dimensions in the concept of unity and discover there the resources for new life."⁶ A study of and an attempt to renew community is bringing us to "The Well" which gives "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" and thus to a deeper integrity of spirituality.

Charismatic renewal and the search for unity

Within Wales, the experience of charismatic renewal has led to new and transforming relationships between Christians of different traditions, between whom, otherwise, there could not have been any significant community. Even more so, I am aware that for many Roman Catholics in Wales the renewal has brought a vision and enthusiasm which has completely transformed their understanding of the ecumenical call to the church, and does so not only on a superficial level, but brings with it an eagerness to grapple, with new commitment, with the fundamental sticking point in relation to the faith we hold in common. Therefore we should take seriously Philip Potter's words about the current charismatic renewal at the Bossey consultation in March 1980:

- a) the charismatic renewal confirms the goal of the ecumenical movement: it is a means of drawing people of different communions together;
- b) it provides a link between the churches of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church, the conservative Evangelicals, and with the Orthodox;
- c) it takes seriously the dialogue of cultures—and that must be vital to growth into unity as a sign of the future unity of humankind.

In the light of that, what positive contribution can this charismatic renewal make to the "common spiritual encounter" which is so fundamental to our growth towards unity?

Of course, we must not be uncritical of this renewal. There are serious questions to be asked. Is the unity which is created by the renewal a superficial unity which does not take seriously the need to "grow towards consensus in faith"? Does the community created by the renewal bypass the need to wrestle with church structures and patterns of decision-making in such a way that the living, organic and visible unity of the church is not furthered? More generally, does the charismatic renewal so trivialize the vital and painful efforts at reaching consensus that ultimately it is counter-productive, creating a certain level of unity, a "unity of experience", which is not a unity in

depth? Indeed there are many who would assert that far from being a unifying force it merely sets a new exclusivism and inwardness in place of the traditional denominational barriers; that it replaces one closed community with another. Nevertheless, if it helps us to grasp again the centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit in our growth towards the unity of all things in Christ, then we must seek ways of strengthening the dialogue and inter-relationship between united and uniting churches and the charismatic renewal.

Consensus and renewal of eucharistic fellowship

In recent years three ecumenical documents have highlighted the growing convergence on the meaning and practice of the eucharist: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (the Lima Text), the final report of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission and the more recent *God's Reign and our Unity* (the report of the Anglican/Reformed International Commission) have all considerably enriched our insights into our "eucharistic centre".

The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches affirmed that "Christ—the life of the world—unites heaven and earth, God and world, spiritual and secular. His body and blood, given us in the elements of bread and wine, integrate liturgy and diaconate, proclamation and acts of healing... Our eucharistic vision thus encompasses the whole reality of Christian worship, life and witness and tends to shed new light on Christian unity in its full richness of diversity."⁷

Here then we are brought to the very heart of an integrated spirituality, the essential unity of worship and witness: "If the bread of the eucharist is the bread of eternal life and if in breaking it we enter into communion with Christ and with each other, it is only natural that we should fight against hunger, poverty, illnesses and other manifestations of social injustices with regard to other people who are all brothers and sisters."⁸

One of the achievements of the Covenant in Wales is that we have been able to reach agreement between all the covenanted churches on an Order for Holy Communion to be used on the occasion of joint celebration of the eucharist; increasingly such joint celebrations have become the focus of the churches' growth towards unity. World Council of Churches' documents have been crucial here. I raise one cautionary note. Agreed joint rites of this kind tend towards the more structured and set liturgical pattern which is common to many traditions but would be unacceptable as the regular rite by many others. We need to be careful that we do not delude ourselves into believing that we have resolved the tension between freedom of expression and set patterns, by the approval of rites such as this for use

on certain occasions—such resolution belongs to the future and there is much work still to be done. Theological and liturgical consensus is one thing, integration of such consensus into the life of diverse congregations is another! The whole question of intercommunion is still very much a live issue and it is essential and urgent that we continue the efforts to seek solutions. Nevertheless, I rejoice that in Wales we have taken one further step towards this eucharistic fellowship. For at such points of common celebration, the Christian community becomes a living sign and witness of the ultimate fulfilment of human fellowship and destiny in “the feast of the Lamb”.

The recently published “Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration”⁹ highlights the growing convergence not only in theological understanding but also in liturgical expression, and contributes to the mutual enrichment which the convergence makes possible.

In conclusion, there is a need, within the movement towards unity, for rediscovering common patterns of spirituality which will open up possibilities of renewed fellowship and thus create the only context in which wrestling with consensus agreements can be seen for what it is: an attempt to discern what God the Holy Spirit is already making of the churches’ traditions and understandings.

Specifically, united and uniting churches and church union negotiations should be encouraged to develop such patterns of spirituality. The following are some of the ways in which this could be done:

- by giving priority to developing a common understanding and expression of spirituality within their own society;
- by establishing patterns of regular prayer and Bible study (personal and group) as a step towards discovering “a fellowship of new life” as the foundation of their growth towards union;
- by the preparation and use of common lectionaries at national and regional level;
- by the use of a calendar of mutual intercession to be used alongside *For All God’s People*,¹⁰
- by initiating “experimental” patterns of spirituality and mission on the basis of the experience of Local Ecumenical Projects;
- by continuing the attempts to integrate the agreements on the eucharist into the understanding and practice of the churches;
- by initiating a series of discussions with charismatic renewal groups so that through new patterns of community and spirituality their significance in the search for visible unity may be assessed;
- by continuing to wrestle with the relationship between the community of women and men and the growth towards unity;
- by seeking ways of enabling a dialogue and community between united and uniting churches and people of other living faiths;

—by looking again at what groups such as the basic Christian communities of Latin America have to say to us about the unity of spirituality and prophetic witness in an unjust and oppressed society.

Ultimately, my plea would be that we envision the efforts of growth into consensus within the widest possible context: the gathering up of all persons and all things into a new community and unity in Christ.

This was a unique contribution of the Vancouver Assembly. The whole gathering became a worshipping community within which “a glorious patchwork” of languages, cultures, traditions, theological insights, socio-political contexts, was formed into a truly ecumenical spirituality. The tent in which we worshipped became a point of encounter not only with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but also with one another. It became the point at which we most clearly discerned the integrity of justice and peace, unity and community, witness and worship in a wholeness of spirituality, which “shares in Christ’s wholeness, and is directed towards the wholeness of loving and living which he exemplified”. Such worship pointed us to what God is making not only of the church but of the world.

It is this necessity to relate our attempts at negotiating agreements and schemes of union to this larger vision of doxology which is held out for us (for example) by St John the Divine in Revelation:

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands (there is the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven) saying... ‘Worthy is the Lamb...’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein (there is the whole universe), saying, ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb... be blessing and honour, glory and might for ever and ever!’ (Rev. 5:11ff.)

We seek to grow (in all our diversity of spirituality) towards that ultimate unity!

NOTES

1. *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, official report of the WCC’s Fifth Assembly, ed. David Paton, London, SPCK, and Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976, p. 60.
2. From an open letter from the Division of Ecumenical Affairs of the British Council of Churches to the Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC, autumn 1979.
3. From the second report of the churches of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales.
4. “Growing into the Prayer of the Risen Christ”, paper by Martin Conway for the British Council of Churches’ Standing Conference for Unity in Prayer.

5. *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July 1984, p.259.
6. *Ibid.*, p.256.
7. *Gathered for Life*, official report of the WCC's Sixth Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, 1983, ed. David Gill, WCC, Geneva, 1983, Report of Section II, "Taking Steps Towards Unity", pp. 44ff.
8. Vitaly Borovoy in his presentation to the Sixth Assembly on "Life in Unity", *ibid.*, p.26.
9. "Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration", eds Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, *Faith and Order Paper No. 117*, Geneva, WCC, 1983.
10. WCC, Geneva, 2nd ed., 1983.

A. The Theology, Theory and Practice of Church Union

SOME CENTRAL ISSUES FACING UNITED CHURCHES

DAVID GILL AND ETHEL MITCHELL

The Uniting Church in Australia was formed in 1977 by the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches. One of the goals affirmed by the three bodies in their basis of union was "a continuing renewal in which God will use their common worship, witness and service to set forth the word of salvation for all mankind".

The link between church union on the one hand and mission and renewal on the other surfaced regularly in pre-union conversations. Making the connection in practice, however, has proved somewhat complicated.

How does a united church remain a uniting church, open to the prospects of growth towards fuller unity?

First and foremost the church must watch its attitudes. Beware ecumenical exhaustion, especially if union negotiations have been protracted. (Australia's union talks lasted twenty years; any longer and we would have been in deep trouble.) Guard against disillusionment, especially if union has been oversold as the panacea for every problem. Resist the temptation to ecumenical arrogance, either with regard to other churches ("we are the united church, and now it's up to other churches to join us") or with regard to ecumenical structures (lest they start to look like wholly owned subsidiaries of united churches). Be alert to the denominational and cultural limitations of each united church, and work at increasing its receptivity to the church of other times, places and traditions.

Much depends on the quality of life of the united church. If it becomes itself a manifestation of churchly renewal, if it can celebrate

diversity within its own ranks and resist pressures that would turn unity into uniformity, if it fosters relations with other denominations especially at parish level, if its people learn to pray for other churches just as they pray for their own, if without waiting for formal negotiations it begins reflecting on theological issues raised for it by other churches and thus anticipates the future ecumenical agenda, then it will be the kind of body that is "unite-able with", recognized by itself and others as ready to take further steps towards realizing the dream of unity.

In Australia's basis of union, the uniting churches declared "their readiness to go forward together in sole loyalty to Christ the living Head of the Church; they remain open to constant reform under His Word; and they seek a wider unity in the power of the Holy Spirit". The power of that dream is what saves a united church from relapsing into sectarian complacency.

How can union serve as a basis of renewal?

Union can further renewal. It can also, unfortunately, hinder it. In Australia it has done both.

Positively, union helped us discover the church as a dynamic, living organism rather than something locked up in forms inherited from centuries past. Old ways and inherited assumptions could be examined afresh in order to disentangle those bearing the abiding marks of the gospel from those echoing long-gone theological disputes or cultural accretions. We began to discover gifts and resources too long neglected or even repressed: for example, in the role of the laity, the ministry of elders, and the use to which the church's considerable resources of personnel and property are put. "Churchmanship" became exciting.

But union also distracted us from renewal. The inevitable preoccupation with changing structures consumed valuable time and energy. Unfamiliar procedures damaged morale. Some, in their insecurity, were tempted to rely on regulations more than relationships for solving problems. Australia's deep-seated allergy to authority and its suspicion of leadership gave rise to convoluted decision-making patterns that condemned the Uniting Church's best people to spending far too much time in committees doing the household chores, to the detriment of mission. Disputes over property with some who chose not to enter the union strained friendships and did nothing to improve Christianity's public image.

Given the quirkiness of human nature, most of that trauma could not have been avoided. The encouraging thing, five years after union, is people's widespread desire to move beyond a preoccupation with the nuts and bolts issues of reorganization to give substance to renewal as their continuing goal. Along the way they are discovering that renewal

is generally the product of relationships, never of self-satisfied isolation; and, sometimes, the more difficult the relationships, the more profound is the renewal that flows from them.

How can union serve as an impetus for more effective mission?

The Toronto Consultation of United and Uniting Churches (1975) saw the promise. United churches, it said, are in principle freer to address themselves to the vital issues of the society in which they live. That is why strong links beyond national boundaries are so important for united churches.

The Uniting Church in Australia is moving cautiously to take advantage of that new freedom for mission. Caution is called for because we find ourselves in a rapidly changing culture of elusive identity. We have learned to value the insights received from churches elsewhere and are sensitive to Toronto's warning against cultural captivity; and we suspect that precipitate attempts at being distinctively "Australian" could end up as nothing but exercises in eccentricity.

A united church must grasp the importance of "identity-shaping events" during its crucial early years. In August 1980, for example, some of our pastors were jailed when they joined with Aboriginal people protesting government-sponsored attempts to mine in the vicinity of an Aboriginal sacred site. The ensuing furor showed that the pastors had the overwhelming support of our church members. Almost by accident they helped the Uniting Church define itself as the kind of church that is prepared to stand up to the powerful when it sees people being trodden on. The incident did not, of course, happen in a vacuum, and things might have turned out very differently if the three churches before union had not been active in combating racism. Things would certainly have turned out differently if the Uniting Church had been more concerned about preserving its apparently fragile new relationships than with its mission.

But the question itself needs to be questioned. "How can union serve as an impetus for more effective mission?" is like asking "How can faithfulness to the gospel serve as an impetus for more effective mission?" Union is not simply a device employed in order to achieve certain goals, but a response to God's act in Christ that needs no other justification.

How should united churches relate to those churches and congregations that choose not to enter union?

In Australia, Methodism's decision to enter the Uniting Church was binding on all members. The Congregational and Presbyterian Churches opted for union, but both allowed dissenting members and

congregations to stay out. Presbyterians, for example, provided that where one-third of a congregation voted against union, that minority could retain its property. Assets were also divided at state and national levels. This generous allowance for the minority did not, as had been hoped, prevent bitterness. For many, the decision for or against union meant parting from old friends and leaving much-beloved places of worship. In spite of great efforts on both sides, for some the union meant pain, sadness and even bitterness.

Relations between the Uniting Church and continuing Presbyterians and Congregationalists now range from muted hostility through coolness to earnest efforts towards reconciliation. All parties need patience, and a determination to keep all doors open even when overtures are rebuffed. For the Uniting Church in particular, with its clear ecumenical commitment, no effort should be too great nor should the word "hopeless" appear in our vocabulary.

Concretely, this means seeking opportunities to build bridges locally between congregations, youth groups and ministers. It means sharing information and resources on the local level, looking for opportunities for joint action, praying for each other. At other levels of the church's life, opportunities should be sought for joint chaplaincies in institutions, cooperative ventures in new areas, reciprocal invitations to each other's synods and assemblies. Trust must grow and time elapse before the issue of union again can be discussed. Yet that issue must remain on the agenda, for the state of separation among Christians is not a situation that any of us can accept.

What are the considerations for deciding that it is (or is not) appropriate to break one fellowship in order to enter into union with other parties?

Union, as indicated, may entail paying a very considerable price. In making the decision, questions like the following need to be taken into account.

- Is there a strong conviction, with a sound theological basis and biblical foundation, that union is the way forward? Is it clear that there is no departure from the centrality of the person and will of Jesus Christ?
- Does the union have the informed support of a significant majority of church members? (A simple majority is certainly not sufficient, but what is the necessary level of support may vary from place to place.)
- Will the decision to unite be seen by those outside the church as enhancing the credibility of its message, or will the arguments and litigation that may follow have the reverse effect?

- Will union enable us to take what is best in our denominational heritages into an even richer fellowship, or will it require the denial of precious heritages?
- Will union open up fresh opportunities for renewal in the church's worship, service and decision-making? Will the new Uniting Church, for example, be more appropriate to Australia's emerging complex of cultures than were the forms we inherited as Anglo-Saxon transplants from the other side of the world? Will union enable better participation in God's purpose for his world, more authentic witness to the gospel of reconciliation, more faithful stewardship of the church's resources?
- But the over-riding consideration is this: Is the decision to unite made in obedience to a perceived call of God, in response to God's free gift of grace? Seen in that context, other considerations and the difficulties that might arise become secondary and capable of resolution. The pain of separation when a minority opts for a different path is a cost that must be borne.

A. The Theology, Theory and Practice of Church Union

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNION FOR THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

GILLIAN BOBBETT

Central Church, Swindon, is a local union church in a town which contains six other different local ecumenical projects.¹ It resulted from the coming together of five separate congregations of different denominational traditions to form one worshipping congregation, and is served by a team of ministers drawn from those different traditions.

The initial vision

In 1970 a commission set up by the Swindon Council of Churches challenged the churches in the centre of the town to demolish all their existing buildings, to build a joint church centre, to develop a team ministry to serve the town centre as well as the church community, and to seek to develop ways of serving the whole church in Swindon. By 1973 Board Street Church of Christ, the Methodist Central Hall, Sanford Street United Reformed Church (formerly Congregationalist), Trinity United Reformed Church (formerly Presbyterian) and the Baptist Tabernacle had accepted this challenge and the process of rationalizing buildings began. In 1974 Central Churches were designated a local ecumenical project and a conference with denominational leaders was held. Consequently the Anglican industrial chaplain, who had been working in Swindon for some years, became a member of Central Churches team, as did also a Methodist lay training officer who worked for the Anglican Diocesan Education Committee as well as the Methodist District. Thus Central Churches established formal links with the Church of England, and a team consisting of pastors, who serve the local congregation as well as seeking to serve the town centre, and those engaged in sector ministry,

for whom Central Church is a base, was established. From its inception Central Church team has included women and men, and ordained and lay members, although at present there is no lay participation. By September 1983 there had been a complete change over of team personnel.

In 1976 all worship became united worship and a comprehensive pastoral scheme based on the monthly distribution of the church magazine *The Spokesman* was begun. This is based on geography, not denomination. There are almost fifty district visitors, each responsible for a group of members and adherents living in a particular locality. Each of the three pastoral ministers is responsible for a third of these districts, but there is some flexibility in this. In crisis situations the minister most available, or best known to the person concerned, is the one who acts. If there is a request for a denominational minister to visit this is honoured.

The challenge of diversity

The bringing together of different worship traditions raised questions about communion and baptism, as well as about which hymnbook to use, and who should be responsible for church flowers! Should communion be celebrated every Sunday as in the Churches of Christ and the Church of England, or much less frequently, as in churches of Presbyterian tradition? Should the style of communion be a formal liturgy or an informal celebration? Should members receive the bread and wine from their neighbour where they sit, or from a minister at the front of the church? These questions were all resolved through discussion and the results have now stood the test of eight years practice. A communion service is held each Sunday, but not always at the same time of day; three different forms of communion are used according to a rota, which bears no relation to which of the ministers is presiding. The forms of communion do not have denominational names; they are called HC1, HC2 etc. With regard to baptism, we have in our midst those who practise infant baptism (Methodist and United Reformed Church) and those who practise believers' baptism (Baptists and Churches of Christ). We are agreed that Christian baptism when it is applied to infants should normally be the baptism of the children of believing parents, and that all parents should be offered the alternative of a service of thanksgiving and dedication. With regard to the baptism of believers we are agreed that baptism is normally only undertaken by those coming to faith for the first time, who have not previously been baptized. This baptism is usually, but not invariably, by immersion, and all candidates so baptized become members of the church.² Services for the reception of new members usually include both baptisms and confirmations and

occasionally the reception of members confirmed by an Anglican bishop.

The life of Central Church today

In 1978 we adopted a new constitution and became Central Church. All new members are placed both on Central Church roll and on a denominational roll, the choice of the latter sometimes being quite arbitrary. Explorations are now taking place to discover if it is still necessary for us to keep separate denominational lists.

A number of obvious benefits have stemmed from our coming together, including several examples of the freeing of energies of church members for new initiatives. We have a visual arts group which often stimulates our worship visually by hanging mobiles and collages in our rather plain church building. We have a growing awareness of the need to exercise a healing ministry both through the prayers of members and the laying-on of hands. Dance and drama also find a place within our worship. Our young people are confident in their faith, and are quite convinced that what matters is to be Christian, not to claim a denominational tag. A number of people born overseas have joined our membership because they come from united churches. Such people help us to understand the true meaning of the word "ecumenical". The team framework to our ministry has meant that we have been able to offer stimulating placements, lasting from one month to a year, to both overseas visitors and to theological students.

There are also ongoing perplexities. We still do not have our new building, and the constant negotiations with planners, financiers and church authorities continue to sap our energies. We struggle to find the right pattern for internal church administration, and only slowly discover that we have different expectations about how the jobs should be done. There is work still to be done on our relationships with neighbouring Christians including the Anglican parish church. We are slowly developing a concept of being a church for the town centre, and not just a church which happens to meet in the town centre.

The wider context: our local union and national union efforts

There are some distinct disadvantages of pushing ahead with local union in advance of national agreements between parent denominations.³ It is cumbersome to have to deal simultaneously with up to four different bodies, all of whom have different methods of administering buildings and finance. There are too many synods and councils to which Central Church is entitled to send representatives, and yet it is important not to drop out of denominational church life, or else we become just another denomination. It is difficult to coordinate the movements of team members, when each denomination has a different

method and time-scale for moving ministers from one pastorate to another. Our Anglican team member faces some restrictions with regard to his celebrating communion within Central Church. Closer unity at national level would relieve many of these problems.

In Swindon we had looked forward to the proposed English Covenant, involving Anglicans, Methodists, United Reformed and Moravians, not because of the exact content of the proposals but because this seemed to be a practical step to take nationally, and also because we had hoped that within the Covenant we would have been allowed a rather more radical experiment in the Swindon area, with one ecumenical bishop working in council instead of the four denominational bishops envisaged by the Churches' Council for Covenanting. Now the Covenant has failed and many Christians are looking towards local ecumenical projects for the next bridgehead for Christian unity in England. In Central Church, as in other local ecumenical projects, we know we belong together; no failure of national negotiations can shake that fact; and so we are not disheartened, just frustrated by the time-consuming delays of continuing to relate to our separated denominations. In Swindon as a whole we still have hopes for our ecumenical bishop. After all, this scheme developed quite separately from the covenanting negotiations, but we are aware that without the Covenant it will be more difficult to persuade church lawyers to make the necessary concessions. Our hope is that we might be allowed a limited pilot scheme.

I believe that the failure of the Covenant puts even more emphasis on local church initiatives towards unity, but unless the history of the church is to become yet more fragmented, there is urgent need for union moves at national and international levels also.

NOTES

1. Local ecumenical projects are recognized by the member churches of the British Council of Churches where there is at the level of the local church a formal, written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life and/or buildings of more than one denomination, and that agreement is recognized by the appropriate denominational authorities.
2. This understanding about the practice of baptism is similar to that agreed nationally between the United Reformed Church and the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ.
3. Central Church rejoiced in the national union of the United Reformed Church and the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ in September 1981.

B. Unity and Renewal: United Churches as Agents of Mission and Reconciliation

THE SEARCH FOR UNITY IN A DIVIDED NATION

WESLEY ARIARAJAH

A divided nation

"In Sri Lanka today", says Joseph Kitagawa, "everybody has become a problem to everybody else. This is so because everybody's personal self-identity is inexplicably marked by the ethnic community to which he or she happens to belong, which in turn is very eager to maintain its 'group-identity' in contra-distinction to all other ethnic communities." This is evidenced by a particular type of communal tension. A Tamil person does not necessarily hate a Sinhala person or vice versa; at a personal level and in social relationships the Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim are frequently on the best of terms with one another. "And yet, between *the* Tamil and *the* Sinhalese there seems to exist an unbridgeable chasm, and the tension between these two communities is unquestionably a dominant factor of the national life of Sri Lanka today."¹

What is of interest to us here is the place of the Christian community in the Sri Lankan social order. Of the 15 million people, 70 percent of the population is Sinhala, while 28.2 percent speak Tamil. In this predominantly Buddhist nation, almost all Buddhists are Sinhalese and all Hindus are Tamils. The ethnic-linguistic division is thus also a religious division, with the church as the exception! The Christian community which forms about 8 percent of the population is drawn from both the ethnic-linguistic sections and is therefore placed in a unique situation in the nation's troubled history.

The Sinhala-Tamil animosity has its roots in early history, where the two distinct communities that migrated to the island from different parts of India struggled to control different parts of the island.

Eventually when the Portuguese, the first colonizers, arrived in 1505 there were separate Tamil and Sinhala kingdoms. The Portuguese and later the Dutch and the British who followed them, progressively united the island for administrative purposes.

When the island received its independence in 1948, old rivalries began to show up again as Tamils began to ask for a place in the national life while the Sinhalese attempted to build a "Sinhala-Buddhist" nation. Hundreds have died, thousands have fled their homes and millions of rupees worth of property have been destroyed in the bloody race riots of 1958, 1978, 1981 and 1983. The chasm between the Sinhalese and the Tamils has widened so much that many Tamils have begun to see a separate state as the only viable solution to the vexed question.

The challenge to the churches

Can the church bring the word of peace, reconciliation and unity to this nation that is at war with itself? As the church is the only religious group that has both ethnic groups in significant numbers it has an important and challenging opportunity to witness to national harmony. On this score the church has a good record. There has been remarkable harmony between the ethnic groups within the church. They have common decision-making bodies such as synods and conferences; they insist on training clergy from both ethnic groups in a common theological institution; during communal riots churches have extended the hand of friendship to both groups, and at times voices from within the church have dared to advocate the cause of the opposite ethnic group against the prevailing mood in the country.

The basic question, however, is whether such harmony within the church can continue to exist in a divided nation, especially as the church identifies itself more and more with the problems faced by the nation as a whole. The essential link between the unity of the church and the renewal of human community and their mutual interdependence becomes clear in the Sri Lankan situation. As Christians participate in this double identity of being both Christians *and* Sinhalese or Tamil at the same time, the unity of the nation becomes part of the churches' search for its unity. The communal tension becomes an enormous spiritual burden to individual Tamils and Sinhalese Christians as they seek to exercise both their identities in a responsible way. While the unity of the church can become both a sign and a calling to the nation, such unity can be sustained and becomes meaningful only in the context of the unity and renewal of the society as a whole. Otherwise the church would be in danger of not facing the national issues honestly within its own life for fear of divisions within, and would be pushed further to the margins of national life.

The divisions within the Christian community should also be mentioned here in order to give a proper perspective of the situation. For over thirty years the mainline Protestant churches have worked on a scheme for church union but the churches still remain divided mainly due to legal suits brought against union by dissentients. In the eyes of the nation the Christians divided into Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Church of South India, Baptist, Presbyterian and a host of other sects, unable to work in cooperation and to speak the word of unity to themselves, can have no right to speak about national reconciliation. While the Sinhala-Tamil division is rooted in the history of the nation, the confessional differences are seen as divisions "imported" from abroad which should be more easily overcome. The church's lack of will to overcome its own division is a scandalous impediment to its witness to the nation.

Thus to the church in Sri Lanka the unity of the church and the renewal, unity and reconciliation of humankind is an indivisible whole. The churches' unity, both confessional and ethnic, can be an effective witness to a divided nation. On the other hand a divided church loses even its right to minister to the nation. Further, the unity of the church and its community can never be seen as ends in themselves for it is inalienably linked to the unity of the nation as a whole. The credibility of the Christian message as a message of reconciliation and unity is itself very much at stake.

NOTE

1. "Anatomy of Sinhalese-Tamil Tension in Sri Lanka", *Dialogue*, New Series, Vol. IV, No. 3, September-December 1977, p.80.

B. Unity and Renewal: United Churches as Agents of Mission and Reconciliation

A NEW CHURCH IN A NEW NATION

D.M. MUSUNSA

The United Church of Zambia went into union in 1965 after 35 years of negotiations. The talks were started mostly by lay people who were working on the Copperbelt and who began gathering themselves together in church choirs. These talks eventually led to church union conversations. At that time our country was known as Northern Rhodesia and was ruled by the British. There were different denominations working within the country, which settled into separate areas and worked amongst different tribes. Hence our country was sociologically divided so that even different forms of worship were associated with individual tribes.

In our present union we have incorporated four different churches. Before union these were working in the following areas: in the southern part of Northern Rhodesia there was the British Methodist Missionary Society (now called the Methodist Church Overseas Division); in the western part there was the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society also known then as the Church of Barotseland (the PEMS is now known as the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action or CEVAA). In the north-eastern part of the country there was the Church of Scotland, and in Luapula Province the London Missionary Society. Then in 1958 the latter two united and were called United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR). In 1965 the UCCAR united with the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the Methodist Missionary Society and was then called the United Church of Zambia. At that time we hoped that other churches in Zambia would also unite with us: in 1967 we had further church union

negotiations with the Anglicans and also the Presbyterian Church of Zambia but these did not last long. To date we have a working relationship with these churches (e.g. sharing pulpits, cooperative services, and other activities) but we are not fully united.

The missionary societies still work in partnership with us and we receive personnel and financial assistance from England, Scotland, Canada (through the United Church of Canada), and through CEVAA and the Council for World Mission. (Both CEVAA and CWM are groups of churches from various parts of the world formed from the results of mission work carried out by the former Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society respectively. In each group the member churches work together in equal partnership.) We also have some other associate workers from America who come to help us in Zambia.

What has this union achieved? It has achieved many good things, but one specific attainment is that it has broken down the tribal barriers. Denominational barriers are still there although they are much weaker than they were in earlier days. The tribal traditions are changing. Racial feeling is dying out. We are able to exchange pulpits: even in churches where previously no black face would ever have preached it is possible today. I would say that it is a blessing that the uniting church has helped tremendously in bringing all the different tribes together. Formerly they all regarded each other as different from themselves. As it has been pointed out above, if I belonged to Southern Province I had nothing to do with a person from Northern Province; if I was from Cobberbelt Province I had nothing to do with a man or woman from Eastern Province. Since union, it is possible to go anywhere and find a place of worship. You meet a brother or a sister in the Lord Jesus everywhere you go.

The independence of the government of the Republic of Zambia also played a great part in breaking down tribal barriers. The government of the Republic was born a year before our United Church, so that its independence aided the independence of the Church. The Church and the government were working together and they still do so. "One Zambia—One Nation" is the government's motto, and our country has a one-party participatory democracy. This government has helped the UCZ through its methods of administration. It has helped by its systems of posting civil servants and political leaders to different provinces, not based upon their province of origin but appointing them according to the needs of each province. This has helped the unity of our Church because whenever you go to a new administrative centre you will probably find a member of the United Church of Zambia from another part of the country. This has enabled the good news to spread. Also, our government has an educational system which is very helpful

to the people of Zambia. They have built secondary schools all over the provinces. Students are trained in these provinces irrespective of their areas of origin so that they grow together as children of one family, of one race, rather than having their tribal feelings encouraged.

As the United Church of Zambia entered into its first, second and third years it had problems of growing together, of its members getting to know and understand each other, having come from different denominations, different tribes and cultures. To understand each other was not easy. We needed a strong leader. The first elected president of the church was the Rev. Dr Colin Morris who really understood the African situation. 1969 was a critical year in our united church. People felt that they should go back to their former denominations. But the church's president, who understood both Africans and Europeans, brought us together and drew us to Almighty God for guidance and the Holy Spirit showed us the way forward. From that time our church became stronger and now we are powerful and more determined than ever. More people have joined the church because of the unity and the love expressed for each other.

B. Unity and Renewal: United Churches as Agents of Mission and Reconciliation

CHURCH UNION AND THE HEALING OF SOCIETY

DAVID W.A. TAYLOR

On the day that the Presbyterian Church (USA) was born, a press reporter wrote: "The Civil War has now come to an end." The statement catches an important element of significance in this 1983 union that brought together the United Presbyterian Church in the USA and the Presbyterian Church in the US—churches that were sometimes referred to informally as the "northern" and "southern" Presbyterian churches, respectively. A crucial part of the meaning of this union has to do not only with the reunion of the church but also with the healing of the nation.

The burden of history: the American Civil War and its aftermath

The Civil War to which the reporter made reference was the bloody national struggle between the northern and southern states which began in 1861 and ended four years later with the surrender of the southern armies at Appomatox, Virginia. The relationship of the church to that national schism and to its subsequent reconciliation is part of the meaning of the reunion of Presbyterian Churches which occurred in Atlanta, Georgia, on 10 June 1983—122 years after the separation.

The issues that provoked the American Civil War are familiar, and need not be reiterated here. What is important to note, however, is that Presbyterians made little attempt to be non-partisan in that struggle. On the contrary, the immediate occasion for the 1861 split within the Presbyterian Church in the USA (as it was then called) was a resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the church in that year which made support of the Federal Union (i.e. the northern armies) a matter of Christian faithfulness. The southern delegates thereupon walked

out, and a few months later organized in Augusta, Georgia, the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America—regarding support of the southern national cause a matter of Christian faithfulness. The issues of the war were couched in moral terms, and resoundingly proclaimed in Presbyterian pulpits both of the north and of the south. In this struggle, the churches served both to form and to articulate the conscience of their respective warring societies.

Four years later, the armies of the south were defeated, and the Confederate States of America came to an end as a nation. But the conscience of the southern cause could not be so easily subdued. It continued to find residence—indeed embodiment—in the church. The Presbyterians of the south, renamed the Presbyterian Church in the US after the war, did not hesitate to speak of the church as "our southern Zion". It was not the expression of military or political defiance so much as it was the expression of a sense of the divine rightness of one's cause. The terms of the military occupation, and of the period of "reconstruction" following the war, served to intensify the sense of regional isolation of the south. The south, defeated in war, continued to live and flourish in the church.

The above sentences are written from a southern point of view. It is necessary for this chronicle that it be so, because Presbyterians of the north found it possible to seek reconciliation after the war far more quickly than those of the south. Unless one is prepared to be summarily judgmental, it is necessary to inquire why this difference in attitude, north and south, should be so. The difference, it appears, has to do with the contrasting experience of the victors and the vanquished. After the war, the people of the north rejoiced for a season, and then took up life once again as before. But for the people of the south, everything was fundamentally changed. Its economic base was destroyed. Its cities lay in ruins. Its social customs were interdicted. Its regional pride was humiliated. Enlightened policies of post-war relationship might have hastened the national healing, but they were not to be. The agricultural south became an economic colony of the industrial north, and remained so for a hundred years. Discriminatory freight rates favoured the conquerors in shipments north and south. The south, which had given the nation more than half its presidents prior to the war was not to see another elected as president for more than a century—until Jimmy Carter was so elected in 1976.

Politically, the south adopted a defensive posture, subsuming private interests under concerns of the region considered to be more critical, thus returning its senators and representatives to the national Congress year after year, enabling them to gain seniority, chairmanships, and an influence disproportionate to their numbers. As the southern states have come in recent years to share more equitably in

the national commonwealth, this defensive posture has begun to relax, and with it its monolithic political profile as well. With it also has come the readiness of Presbyterians of the south to seek reconciliation and reunion with their brothers and sisters of the north.

The process of union

A. Overview

The leadership of both churches have advocated reunion for more than thirty years before it occurred. Principal among such voices was that of Dr Harrison Ray Anderson, then pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, Illinois. His grandfather had proposed the resolution in the General Assembly of 1861 which precipitated the division of the church; two generations later, Dr Anderson pleaded earnestly and persistently for the reconciliation of the church. The three-way union which was unsuccessfully attempted in 1954 was nonetheless warmly supported by the official leadership of all three churches, including the greater part of their ministry. But in the southern church, it did not achieve a constitutional majority. Years before, the constitutional requirement for reunion had been deliberately raised in the PCUS to a formidable 75 percent affirmative vote of the presbyteries. The actual PCUS vote in 1954 was considerably short of that goal: it was 50 percent for reunion, 49 percent against, and 1 tie vote. Fifteen years later, the southern Presbyterians—after an abortive attempt to unite with the Reformed Church in America (an effort defeated in the classes of the RCA)—took the initiative in 1969 proposing to the United Presbyterian Church in the USA that they together “seek a plan for the reunion of the two churches”. During the fourteen-year course of the joint search for this union, 50,000 members of the southern church (approximately 5 percent of their total) came to see union as inevitable, and chose instead to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in the US in order to form in 1973 the Presbyterian Church in America, constituted along very conservative lines of theology and polity. Their departure, though regretted, undoubtedly hastened the reunion of Presbyterians north and south. The vote on the 1983 reunion was unanimously affirmative among the presbyteries of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, and over 85 percent affirmative among the presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in the US. The time for reunion had come. The nation was healed, and the church was healed as well. The Civil War had at last come to an end.

B. The significance of the reunion for American society

It would be tempting to assign to the church a large share of the credit for the healing of the society. Doubtless it was in a measure so.

But the churches, both north and south, had been too much a part of the struggle to be able easily to free themselves to become agents of reconciliation in the society at large. Nonetheless, the gospel is a reconciling power. The movement for civil rights in the American nation was, especially in its southern expression, based largely in the churches—in the black churches at first, and belatedly in those of the predominantly white constituency as well. In this, the churches did not simply follow the society, but conspicuously led—often at great cost. Though the role of the church in the healing of the nation has not been as great as it ought to have been, it has nonetheless been an instrument of peace. The organizational reunion that occurred in 1983 simply objectified a reconciliation of the spirit which had long since occurred. And yet the reunion itself was a potent and necessary sign. It was the sign and instrument of society's peace.

C. The key to the process: building personal and institutional trust

Many things were done within the two churches to hasten the process of reconciliation, during the fourteen years of intentional effort immediately preceding the union. All were aimed at deepening mutual acquaintance and trust. Though the mobility of American society had already increased the awareness of commonalities on a personal level, what was required for union was a fuller confidence in one another institutionally, as churches.

Four different draft plans of union were put forward during this time, the first three of which were for informal debate and response. This process itself required an ever-deepening familiarization with the institutional style and substance of the other church in the negotiation. About half way through the fourteen-year process, deliberate steps were taken to coordinate and where possible to consolidate all denominational programme which was administered at the national (or general assembly) level. The statistical records of both denominations were combined into a single volume. The annual sessions of the general assemblies themselves began to be held at the same time and place, in alternate years. The denominational programme offices on worship, on world hunger, and on peacemaking were respectively merged into united programme offices. Joint appointment and commissioning of overseas missionaries was instituted. The processes of ministerial placement and relocation were fully integrated. Common procedures and criteria were instituted for testing the qualifications of candidates for the ministry. In relation to the Consultation on Church Union, the delegations of the two churches have functioned for several years as a single delegation with co-chairpersons (one from each church). Every programme of the church at the national level was strictly charged to work jointly wherever possible, and in the closest

coordination—even where it was not constitutionally possible. Opponents of reunion complained that all the above amounted to *de facto* union without the consent of the presbyteries. The assemblies responded that they were deliberately seeking the reunion of the churches, and that these steps were the means to enhance acquaintance.

Of even greater significance than any of the above, however, was the concurrent decision of the two churches in 1969 to amend their constitutional documents in such a manner as to provide for the possibility of forming “union presbyteries” wherever it was mutually desired. In such instances, these union presbyteries became fully and organically united into one governing body, yet dually accountable to both general assemblies in accordance with two denominational Books of Order. Notwithstanding the cumbersome nature of this arrangement, many areas of the church availed themselves of this option. At the time of the reunion, fully one-third of the presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in the US were already union presbyteries, and still others were in process of formation. These presbyteries became the most outspoken advocates of reunion in either denomination. Their influence in affecting the climate of opinion towards union was quite significant.

A challenge for the future

By such means, the two churches came to know each other, and more and more to trust each other. Finally, the decision to unite was based squarely on that trust, even more than on the details of a plan of union. A deliberate decision was made, by the committee drawing up the plan, to postpone decisions concerning administrative structure, judiciary boundaries, and staff until after the union had been consummated. The union was to be based simply on agreement in faith and order, with only a few brief Articles of Agreement concerning the transition, rather than on details of structure or administration. This forced the decision to address the fundamental question of the will of these two churches to reunite. Do the churches really want to be one, or no? That was the issue, and that question was answered in the affirmative by an overwhelming vote of the presbyteries of both churches. The Articles of Agreement provide for a flexible schedule of from five to fifteen years for the structures and realignments of the new church to be developed along the way.

It is this evidence of spiritual reconciliation that led the reporter to say, on the day of reunion: “The Civil War has now come to an end.” It reflects the healing of the society; but more than that, it contributes powerfully to it. The Presbyterian reunion is a sacrament of the healing of the nation.

B. Unity and Renewal: United Churches as Agents of Mission and Reconciliation

THE CHALLENGE OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION AMONG UNITED CHURCHES

REINHARD GROSCURTH

1. The need for sustaining and sustained connections between united churches was emphasized at the united and uniting churches meetings in Bossey (1967), Limuru (1970), and Toronto (1975). Though relatively little has actually happened between united churches, we must not ignore this critical question in our actions and planning.

As a former staff member of the Faith and Order Secretariat and as a participant now in all four of the consultations on united and uniting churches, I am interested in continuity in the ecumenical movement. I am against a “stop-and-start” ecumenism. Therefore I want to begin with the observation that our first three consultations have all addressed my theme. A discussion note in the final report of the Bossey meeting says:

Where possible, united churches should establish mutual relationships of full communion and effective means for consultation on issues such as faith and doctrine, the mutual recognition of members, liturgy, sacraments, and the ministry.¹

Lukas Vischer, in his introduction to the Bossey consultation, argued:

Closer contacts are necessary for a deeper reason as well. As the number of union attempts increases, the question about the nature of future relationships among the united churches grows. The goal of negotiations cannot be limited to leading the churches in a particular country or area into full fellowship. Rather, the question of how the universal character of the church can find expression must be kept constantly in view...²

Thus "the united churches cannot be placed on a common denominator doctrinally or structurally. Their relatedness is rather in a *common attitude and orientation*."³

This issue was taken up by the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1968 in Uppsala, where it was noted by the delegates:

One of the questions to be dealt with in future consultations is the form of relationships of united churches with each other and to confessional families of which they were formerly part.⁴

And three years later the Limuru consultation stressed this even more strongly. Seeking boldly for the unity which exists *among* united churches, Limuru declared as follows:

The conference recognized the need of united churches to establish closer relationships among themselves. Union should not imply the weakening of the world-wide fellowship of the Church. As more and more united churches come into being, it is essential that they recognize each other as sister churches in the full sense of the word and give expression to their communion in Christ at the world-wide level. Of course, it cannot be overlooked that united churches differ in doctrine and structure. They include different traditions. Nevertheless they have much in common. The conference recommends that each united church should examine its relationship to other united churches and that the united churches should give common expression to their mutual recognition.⁵

The invitation to the Toronto meeting in 1975 already introduced this theme, which continued to play an important role throughout the consultation:

Both our felt affinity and our acknowledged diversity lead us to call our churches to a declaration of mutual recognition and to relationships appropriate to such recognition.⁶

The recommendations from Toronto regarding relations among united churches read as follows:

Each united church makes the explicit declaration that it recognises the other united churches as true churches of Jesus Christ and is prepared to receive their members as full communicants into its own membership.

Each united church declares that it regards the ministry of the other united churches as blessed by the Spirit and effective in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Such a declaration would need to take careful account of the fact that each united church must express its ministry in forms suitable to its own unity and mission.⁷

In 1977 the continuation committee set up by the Toronto consultation met in Geneva. On the agenda were such questions as: What would be the significance of such a formally-declared mutual recognition? What should be the reaction to churches whose response is negative or very cautious? How can mutual recognition be given the visibility and prominence it would warrant?

Almost half of the churches which had participated in the Toronto meeting responded in some way to these questions. Based on these answers, Martin Cressey reflected on the meaning and implications of mutual recognition between united churches. Concerning the Toronto recommendation of explicit mutual recognition among united churches, he pointed out that the fundamental question is "whether a specific covenant of united churches... has a valid place alongside other ecumenical relationships". While churches from (for example) Canada and the Philippines could easily accept the mutual openness which Toronto called for, other churches had problems. As to the second recommendation, that regarding mutual recognition of ministries, Cressey felt that it was not clearly enough framed and thus it was "little wonder that the particular questions of the meaning and implication of mutual recognition... do not receive great attention".

This brief summary confirms Michael Kinnamon's remark that, indeed, little has been done since the Toronto meeting to further mutual recognition among united churches. Nonetheless I am still convinced that this issue is critically important for the future of united churches.

2. *Since 30 June 1981, there has existed accountable full communion between the United Church of Christ (UCC) in the USA and the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) in Germany. This is a direct result of the Toronto consultation.*

I would now like to discuss one specific case of mutual recognition, that of the UCC and the EKU. Both churches already had a clear ecumenical consciousness. For the UCC I would refer to the preamble of its constitution, paragraph 2, which reads: "The United Church of Christ acknowledges as its sole head Jesus Christ, Son of God and Saviour. It acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession..."

As far as the EKU is concerned it is enough to stress a few factors which have been significant in the past, and remain so today. The EKU, a union between Lutherans and Reformed churches, was already in existence in 1817 when the 300th anniversary of the Reformation was celebrated. Thus it began under quite different circumstances from those of the united churches of this century. Because of its age and convictions it never became a member of a

Christian World Communion. Since 1972 this church works in two distinct areas, one with five regional churches in the GDR (German Democratic Republic) and the other with three regional churches in the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and West Berlin. Thus the one church is active in two entirely different societies.

3. *For developing closer relationships between united churches several components are needed. Most important are a good knowledge of each other and deep sharing of concerns. We need persons who can understand and interpret those in the other church, and envisage the implications of one's own actions for them. And church leaders alone are not sufficient; one needs the "whole people of God".*

One foundation of the relations between our two churches is historical. One-quarter of the constituency of the UCC in the United States were sons and daughters of the old German Union. When the UCC was formed in 1957, it began with invitations to synods and a regular exchange of pastors and lay persons in the other church. During these first years many friendships developed. The late President Robert C. Moss and I were among the drafters when the Toronto resolutions were formulated. I would like to describe now how we in the ECU worked with the Toronto text, especially its call for mutual recognition among united churches.

The German translation of the recommendations was discussed at length in our ecumenical committees and in the councils (which are the decision-making bodies linking our synods). The ECU wanted to find out whether, and how, the mutual recognition of united churches which had been proposed in Toronto could be put into practice. The councils asked that the ecumenical committees examine the question "which steps should now be taken theologically and legally to implement this recognition". The committees were then asked to begin with the case of the UCC.

You will sense some reluctance in these decisions about "whether" and "how" recognition should occur. There was a fear that "faceless bureaucrats" and "ecumenical managers" would develop theoretically perfect—but impractical—strategies, and then impose them on the churches. This is why there was no positive vote for general recognition of all united churches (*urbi et orbi*), but we were asked to start with one particular church already well-known to us. By beginning with the familiar, we were able to move ahead.

Our ecumenical committee then began to work more closely with the UCC and, as usual in ecumenical work, one draft proposal followed another in the special ECU working group of the UCC. We wished to be more careful than our predecessors in the years 1957 to 1959 had been. There were some remarkable experiences. When we asked for

comments on the Statement of Faith being developed in the UCC, the first question was whether it could be translated into Greek! To some of us this seemed to be the height of ivory-tower irrelevance—but then, who are we to pass judgment upon others?

4. *The notion of "mutual recognition" can be misunderstood; it could imply that we are indeed passing judgment upon another church. This is not our role as human beings. The term "recognition" should, rather, be applied literally: "to know again, to identify as known before" (Concise Oxford Dictionary; cf. *recognitio*).*

From one of the best theologians in the GDR, Christoph Hinz, we learned that this kind of "knowing again" is prior to formal ecclesiological recognition. Bishop Hugh Montefiori, in his correspondence with Lesslie Newbigin ("Unity—Why Not Yet?"), gives a definition of recognition which I also like: recognition includes mutual repentance, extending a mutual welcome, and making a commitment to full unity.

In wrestling with this process of "recognition", the ECU discovered that full communion did indeed exist between itself and the UCC. All that was needed was "a declaration of mutual trust, which identifies the experienced unity of faith and describes its consequences".

We understood that it was not our task to verify the "orthodoxy" of our ecumenical partner. Finally our two synods accepted this fact, and agreed with the following proposals: "The ECU sees neither theological nor legal grounds that would prevent full communion between the ECU and the UCC. It is ready to acknowledge the Baptism, Holy Communion, and ordination of the UCC." It should be emphasized here that the "whole people of God", and not just synods or other official bodies, had been involved in the process leading to recognition. On this basis the UCC, at its general synod on 30 June 1981, called for a "covenant for joint action in faith enrichment and mission outreach" as a "mandate for renewal in mission and faith", and therefore received the offer of recognition by the ECU "as one more gift from the Spirit".

For the ECU the term "mutual recognition" had been replaced by the German word *Kirchengemeinschaft*. This corresponds to the English term "full communion", but has a particular connotation in Europe for the Lutheran, United and Reformed Churches which signed the Leuenberg Concord in March 1973. We in the ECU think that this *Kirchengemeinschaft* cannot be restricted to Lutherans and Reformed, and cannot be limited to Europe, but has to go beyond. It is on the basis of mutual trust and knowledge that ecumenical partners can be open with one another; they can challenge, correct, and comfort each other in mutual accountability. One is allowed—and

forced—to change. This is much more difficult if the partners do not clearly state the full communion which exists between them; otherwise one tends to be ecumenically “polite”.

5. *Possible consequences of having full communion can and must be drawn in all realms of church life. We have begun to do this in three areas: (a) questions of faith and ecclesiology, (b) problems of congregational life and its renewal, and (c) common responsibility towards today's world.*

Here we can give only a few examples of the implications which might result in these areas.

a) The UCC is working on a new Statement of Faith and has declared in its general synod that this cannot be done without the involvement of partners in other churches, including the ECU. Thus a commission of the UCC prepared a paper, “Towards the Task of Sound Teaching in the United Church of Christ”, which has been translated into German, studied by theologians and congregations, and even used in West German theological examinations. Mutual consultation on how the churches can teach authoritatively today is continuing. The Leuenberg Agreement, in which the ECU is involved, is being examined by the UCC, and we are asking whether this will pave the way for better contact with Lutherans in the United States.

b) The need for renewal in congregational life has been clearly recognized on both sides. This has developed from visits between congregations, and particularly through examination of each other's approach to theological education and the training of both pastors and lay persons. In the ECU we have learned a great deal from this about stewardship and about church attitudes towards the handicapped and other minority groups.

c) We are convinced that the problems of world peace are a main priority, and therefore we have an ongoing debate and exchange of views on our mutual responsibility in this area, and with respect to the third world. We have discovered that “full communion” cannot be a narrow, interchurch affair, but must look to the world beyond the walls of the church.

Two quotations will serve to document the political and societal context within which we share our “full communion”. The ecumenical committee of the ECU has noted:

The UCC in the USA and the ECU in both regions (of Germany), respectively, live under very particular political and societal conditions, and thus feel called to a correspondingly distinct witness in each situation. In differing societal structures they witness to the one Lord in the divided world and testify to Jesus Christ, each in its own environment and for its

own society. Full communion implies for us that in our confessing we do not stand alone in facing contemporary challenges, but are supported by the churches and individual congregations which live under the other societal system.

For their part the UCC working group, in its paper for the UCC general synod, moved “from mission to faith”. Thus they mentioned as areas of common concern the local congregation, the third world, church, society and the individual, sound teaching and sound preaching, baptism, and the eucharist. And in light of all this they declared:

In times past the ECU and UCC have worked separately as churches. We now hope to find ways of working together. We call upon our churches to witness together to God's peace on both continents and in different societal structures. We believe that in praying together and working together the possibility of God's peace grows.

6. *There are possible dangers in this kind of close relationship between united churches which are “separated by distance, culture, and time”. Such ties could turn Christians away from their immediate neighbours, appear to outsiders as an ecumenism reserved for wealthy churches, or give rise to fears that a new bilateral church “power block” is being built.*

There is little need to elaborate on these dangers. Instead of local commitment, we may be spending our energy on catching glimpses of a facile “universality”. This would indeed mean “cheap ecumenical grace” for the ECU. There might also be the suspicion that a European church and its transatlantic “daughter church” have succumbed to nostalgia, that they are merely indulging themselves in the recent American fascination with discovering their (common!) “roots”. We might also be told that we have chosen the easy way out, the *lectio facillior*, having avoided ecumenical involvement with the Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and even Anglicans. But in face of all these dangers I would assert the following:

7. *In the perennial struggle between the local and the universal, we need “stepping stones” which make the next step possible and the following steps more assured.*

Converting stumbling blocks into stepping stones—this was the vision of William Temple. In my experience no church is able to leave its own provincialism and, at one stroke, love all 301 member churches of the World Council of Churches (not to mention the Roman Catholic and other non-member churches as well!). In this respect the UCC and the ECU are convinced that their efforts are a contribution to the one

ecumenical movement in general, and to the World Council of Churches in particular.

According to its by-laws, Faith and Order should "provide opportunities for consultation among those whose churches are engaged in union negotiations or other specific efforts towards unity". We are grateful that the Toronto consultation, and its predecessors, have helped us in our endeavours. Here we recall the Toronto recommendation which reads:

The united churches covenant to support one another and to promote together, within the whole ecumenical movement, the fuller manifestation of the unity of the church.⁸

Our goal is to involve more and more united churches in steps towards mutual recognition. The network of trust thus created could help the World Council of Churches, and the one ecumenical movement, to achieve that "fully committed fellowship" which we seek.

NOTES

1. *Mid-Stream*, Vol. VI, No. 3, 1967, p.20, discussion note 6.
2. *Ibid.*, p.3.
3. *Ibid.*, p.4.
4. *The Uppsala Report 1968*, ed. Norman Goodall, Geneva, WCC 1968, p.227.
5. *Mid-Stream*, Vol. IX, Nos. 2-3, 1970, pp.5-6.
6. *Mid-Stream*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, 1975, p.544.
7. *Ibid.*, p.549.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.547-48.

C. United Churches and the Question of Church-state Relations

THE RELATIONSHIP OF UNITED CHURCHES TO THE STATE

KEIJI OGAWA

The history of the multilateral union process of the United Church of Christ in Japan (the Kyodan) during the past forty years reveals several difficulties and failures, the most important of which is its relationship to the state.

The call for unity

Already in 1872—following the establishment in Yokohama of the first Protestant church organization in Japan through the pentecostal experience and baptism of 11 Japanese at the first Week of Prayer meeting in that year—the aim of the Church was to transcend denominationalism. The Kokai members had asked two young American missionaries, one from the Dutch Reformed Church in America and the other from the Presbyterian Church in North America, to help them as acting ministers. The former agreed but the latter rejected the request. This then was the first experience of denominationalism. Following this, further attempts were again made to organize a new united church with the Kokais in Tokyo, Kobe and Osaka—the last two being established under the leadership of Congregational missionaries. This attempt was also rejected from the Congregational side following bilateral negotiations which lasted two years. It might therefore be said that the original goal of Japanese churches to transcend denominationalism was rejected because of strong denominational pressure from the western mission societies and boards.¹

The original idea of church unity nevertheless remained and can be seen in the creation of the following organizations: All Christian

Fellowship Meetings (1878-85), YMCA movement (1880-), the Japan Sunday School Association (1970-), the Christian Evangelical Alliance in Japan (1883-1912), the Alliance of Christian Churches in Japan (1912-1922), and the Federation of Christian Churches in Japan (1922-1941), the two last-named being known by the initials NCCJ. The unity of the churches based on independence from foreign denominations was the original aim, the main ideal, and the indispensable hope of Japanese Christians. This was one of the sincere voices from the younger churches which gathered together at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and which has been echoed ever since in the present World Council of Churches.

The establishment of the Kyodan as a united church

The Kyodan was not established as a direct result of the original desire for unity in the Japanese church. Legal control of the church in Japan by the totalitarian government came through the Religious Bodies Law, which was adopted by the Diet in 1939 and came into effect the following year. Under this totalitarian control more than thirty denominations were forced to unite and to organize what became the Kyodan. At the same time the NCCJ was dissolved.

The plan for union—prepared at government instruction—was approved by the government and the Kyodan was then established in June 1941. However the 34 denominations which united to form the Kyodan (Presbyterian, Reformed, Congregational, Methodist, Baptist, Disciples, Lutheran, Holiness and others—including one-third of the Anglican churches) were unable at that time to find any concrete agreement on doctrine, liturgy and church structure. The Kyodan therefore adopted the “10-bloc system” which came to be called the federal union stage. However, the government was not satisfied with this solution and ordered the Kyodan to dissolve the “bloc” system and move towards greater consolidation. The general assembly in 1942 therefore suddenly dissolved the “bloc” system and constituted a completely unified organization without any attempt to prepare doctrinal or liturgical consensus.

During that period government control was strengthened and the leaders of the Salvation Army and the Holiness Churches were arrested on suspicion of espionage, following which some so-called “low-church” Anglican leaders proposed to the assembly that they join the Kyodan. However the “high-church” leaders rejected this on the assumption that this church union without any classical creed and without an historical episcopacy would destroy the very foundation of the Anglican Church. In January 1943 the Central Office of the Anglican Church in Japan declared that the Anglican Church had already dissolved in March 1942, so one-third of the Anglican

congregations joined the Kyodan and the rest remained as independent churches under the strict control of the police offices and the military police.

The nature of this united church was very different from the unity which the Japanese Christians sought from the beginning as their primary ideal and aim. A vicious uniformity was imposed. Nevertheless, in this way the Kyodan was established as a united church in external form, and some of the Kyodan leaders looked on it as a realization of the original aim brought about by the providence of God. Without this background of government pressure the Kyodan could not have been established through such a rapid process. However this process caused several difficulties for the Kyodan after the end of World War II.

The post-war separation process

Religious liberty was legally established by the new constitution in 1947. With the abolition of the Religious Bodies Law all controls were removed and the Kyodan was free to return to the “bloc” system. Some denominational groups (Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Holiness and others) actually required the “bloc” system as a condition for remaining in the Kyodan. However, the Kyodan neither dissolved into its former denominations nor went back to the “bloc” system; the leaders did not retire, but remained without any mention being made of their responsibility for cooperating in the war effort, and no apologies were made for not having sought a more orderly uniting process.

In January 1946 about 200 conscientious young pastors formed the short-lived “Gospel Comrades” (Fukuin Doshikai) to criticize the attitude of the old Kyodan leadership. They demanded that the old leaders should retire and that the general assembly should meet with newly-elected assembly delegates for the reconstruction of the Kyodan. In response to their proposal the third special general assembly was called on 7 June 1946, but two-thirds of the former delegates were re-elected and the old leaders continued in the important positions. Consequently the assembly decided to follow the Kyodan leadership's three main-line resolutions:

- a) to realize the democratization of leadership structure;
- b) to start the preparation for the adoption of a confession of faith;
- c) to strengthen the importance of the districts (presbyteries) rather than return to the “bloc” system.

The following seven groups therefore withdrew from the Kyodan and formed their old denominations and recovered their separate denominational identities: the Anglicans in October 1945, the Reformed in April 1946, the Holiness and the Salvation Army in

November 1946, the Baptist (South) in April 1947, the Lutheran in November 1947 and a part of the Presbyterian in May 1951.

The reasons for the withdrawal of the above-mentioned bodies were quite different in each case, but nevertheless made it clear that tradition (*paradosis*), in its *denominational* form, is important even in a united church. Unity does not mean relinquishing the traditions which are represented, but raises the question as to how this traditional aspect can be taken care of in the united and uniting churches. The vertical dimension of the tradition of the church, in the form of several World Confessional Families, hinders our union negotiations and even destroys our original, indispensable hope for unity. But without this vertical dimension unity would only be an external, formal uniformity. The horizontal dimension of local or national unity is a stumbling block to retaining church tradition. But without this dimension we cannot build the independent, indigenous church in our own countries without losing the identity of our local church. To hold these two contradictory claims in tension is surely an eschatological task and will be discussed at the conclusion of this study.²

A new phase of difficulty

Through this separation process the Kyodan became one of several denominations in Japan. For this reason the NCCJ was re-established in May 1948 to promote cooperation among the churches and other Christian organizations. The Kyodan itself began to build up a solid structure as a united church. After many difficult discussions the new Confession of Faith, compiled from an introductory statement seeking to set out Protestant principles and the Apostolic Creed, was adopted by the 8th General Assembly in 1954. Thus the Kyodan finally had a basis for doctrinal agreement.

In this process of ecclesiastical consolidation of the Kyodan a new difficulty arose. At a Kyodan pastors' conference in the summer of 1966, which discussed the theme of the "Concept of Church in the Kyodan", participants raised the following questions: "How can the Kyodan take up the question of the meaning of church before it has dealt with the facts of its own history during the war and confessed its own failure?" Based on further discussion at the 14th General Assembly in October 1966, the assembly authorized Moderator M. Suzuki to issue a statement on "The Confession of the Responsibility of the Kyodan during World War II", and this was done on Easter Day 1967. This statement was considered a necessary step to clarify the Kyodan position during the war and to leave the way open for a new future. However, immediately following the publication of the Confession, 26 pastors and leading laymen published an open letter criticizing the content of the Confession from a conservative position.

On the other hand the problem of the Christian Pavillion in Expo '70 in Osaka triggered off a new phase of criticism of the Kyodan leadership. This new criticism came from persons related to the New Left Student Movement and has caused serious confusion in the Kyodan for the last ten years.³

In this new difficult phase, our task is again an eschatological one. How can we hold these two contradictory claims at the same time? Perhaps it can be explained with the words from 2 Peter 3:12, used again and again by Chr. Blumhardt in Bad Boll and K. Barth, that is by "Waiting for and Hastening Unto" (*prosdokontas kai speudontas*). Although there are many serious difficulties for the unity of the church we should not just stand still and be "waiting for". We must "hasten unto" with all possible effort. On the other hand although we must strive eagerly for unity with all possible means, we must not "hasten unto" it too rapidly, with the possible consequence of an empty uniformity without any agreement on doctrines, liturgy and church structure. We should "wait for" the help of God in an attitude of prayer.

NOTES

1. Cf. K. Ogawa, "Schicksal und Hoffnung des Frühökumenismus (Kokai-ismus) in Japan", *Junge Kirche*, 34, Jg., 5, 1973.
2. K. Ogawa, "Die heilsgeschichtliche Einheit der Kirche in ökumenischer Sicht", *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin*, 110, Jg., Hf. 3, 1966, S.123ff.
3. K. Ogawa, "After the Confession of War Responsibility: the Suffering and Hope of the Kyodan." Presentation at the Asian Section of Bangalore Conference of the Commission on Faith and Order, August 1978, FOC/BLR/78:14.

D. On the Way: Churches in Quest of Union

INTERIM EUCHARISTIC
FELLOWSHIP

GERALD F. MOEDE

One of the blessings of a united church is that it enables the unity of its members around the eucharistic table; no longer do its members proclaim the scandal of separation at the very meal which is intended to manifest their unity.

For some time it has been understood that sharing the Lord's Supper is both a sign and a means of unity in Christ. But what does this statement signify in practice?

To demonstrate the truth of this insight, and to begin to build on COCU's growing theological agreement, the general secretary of the Consultation at that time, Dr Paul A. Crow Jr, proposed at COCU's 1971 plenary that the churches move into an "interim eucharistic fellowship [IEF] as a sign of the integrity of the church and a testimony to Christian truth".

Eucharistic sharing: an experiment towards unity

In 1973 a set of guidelines for IEF were written by a small core group. The Consultation created a Commission on Interim Eucharistic Fellowship in 1975, the first task of which was to produce a supplemental interpretive piece, entitled "Steps to IEF".

The guiding principles of creating groups of Christians who would share holy communion together in local places were simple; fourteen groups were established under these principles.

1. *Interim*: Pointing to the present ecumenical situation, a period between old animosities and misunderstandings and new possibilities for manifesting oneness. It also refers in a special way to the Consultation on Church Union, through which ten churches, as yet

still divided, have already discovered large areas of consensus, and notably eucharistic consensus.

2. *Eucharistic*: Referring to the Lord's Supper, the holy communion, the eucharist.

3. *Fellowship*: Not just any fellowship of Christians but one pressing to embody certain basic characteristics:

- a) regular, though occasional, gatherings at the Lord's Table, by Christians who do not ordinarily join there;
- b) efforts to include the full diversity of the Christian community in the area, COCU and non-COCU: people of all racial and ethnic origins, of all incomes, denominations, and ages, both lay and clergy, both male and female; and with these an evident resolve that an Interim Eucharistic Fellowship not be a haven from neighbours in need;
- c) a willingness to be in conversation with the Consultation on Church Union through the Commission on IEF.

Professor W. Jerry Boney, who chaired the IEF Commission, travelled extensively throughout the United States in 1976, visiting active and prospective IEFs from coast to coast. His report, entitled "COCU at the Grass Roots", was published in *Mid-Stream*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, 1977, pp. 310-28.

As the concept matured, the consultation attempted to ascertain that each fellowship would include study and mission along with its eucharistic celebrations. Further, serious efforts were made for each fellowship to be inclusive in terms of racial composition, and to have men and women among the ordained leaders.

A second set of local experiments in joint mission at the local place which COCU inaugurated in the mid-seventies were called "generating committees", and these two projects came to an official conclusion at the 15th plenary meeting of the Consultation in March 1982.

The recommendations and learnings of these two pilot projects are being assembled, and will be of crucial importance to the Consultation as it attempts to envision the form of unity it will attempt to embody at the local level in the years ahead.

Eucharistic sharing as an instrument for theological and ecumenical growth

The following positive factors relate to the initial learnings at the local level, as congregations and middle-level leaders prepare for the time when eucharistic sharing among them is the norm rather than the exception as it is today.

The Interim Eucharistic Fellowships provided a visible evidence of Christian unity and of the Consultation on Church Union's focus and direction. The pain of separation between Christians was alleviated

briefly and those who participated appreciated the "good spirit", the growth of collegiality among clergy, and the IEF as a "way to journey to where we want to be". Meaningful and lasting relationships were established between individuals of different denominations and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Learning about other traditions and testing theological practices helped to develop deep feelings between the participants, and emphasis on the eucharist helped the fellowship to go beyond the ordinary cooperation experienced in councils of churches to a unique experience of oneness.

Some of the fellowships were located in areas where there were several "middle judicatory" offices, while other fellowships functioned at quite a distance from these offices. When bishops or their equivalents in other churches took an active interest and participated personally, very positive results were noted in the health and representativeness of the IEF.

Although most participants in the fellowships did not change their basic theological orientation on the eucharist, many said they had gained in eucharistic understanding—that the IEF experience had offered an opportunity for both learning about and appreciating the eucharistic traditions of other denominations. The practice of "instructed eucharist" of the Episcopal Church was seen as an especially meaningful one.

Through the discussions over differences and the necessary negotiations, most participants felt that an over-arching commonality and oneness were growing among them, enriched by the diversity of traditions. Thus, eucharistic sharing can be seen to be a valuable instrument to stimulate theological growth, ecumenical understanding and Christian community.

"Attractive pluralism" is the term used by one person to describe the meeting-ground some communities found in the IEF. For some it was the first time that black churches had hosted community-wide gatherings, and for others the fellowship provided an opportunity to deepen already existing relationships and developed a greater spirit of cooperation among Christians on community issues.

Several of the IEFs which were located in areas with diverse populations placed a high priority on inclusion of all racial and ethnic groups from the very beginning of their organization. The group in Austin, Texas, was bilingual. Asian-Americans from several congregations participated in one area and one began to see the power of the Lord's Supper in breaking down the barriers which divide.

Other dimensions of the same question were also addressed inasmuch as most IEFs made efforts to include full participation of lay persons in their planning and of women and handicapped people in their ordained leadership.

The negative aspects of this learning process were also identified. The IEF did not make much impact on congregations which did not enter into covenant as a group. In some cases only a small percentage of the members of a congregation would participate.

When "middle judicatory" leaders were indifferent or hostile, the chances of an IEF having much impact were significantly less. On the other hand the bishop could not do everything himself, and the commitment and cooperation of the local ministers and priests were also very important. "Middle judicatory" leaders were also important by the support they gave or did not give in the appointment or calling of clergy to congregations. If a good ecumenical beginning had been made in a congregation, and a new pastor without ecumenical interest was then called or appointed, the ecumenical future of the congregation was jeopardized.

Practical questions such as "Do we use wine or grape juice for communion?" did produce difficulties, but generally ways were found to overcome them.

Lessons for the future: from eucharistic sharing to the full unity of Christ's body

In conclusion, the IEF Commission drew up the following list of themes from a review of the various local groups which assembled.

- The Lord's Table is a uniquely powerful centring reality, and nowhere is this more evident than when it gathers and centres an ecumenical community of Christians in the power of the Holy Spirit, prefiguring the Banquet to come.
- An ecumenical community gathering at eucharist discovers that their joining at the Table brings depth and balance to all other ecumenical endeavours they engage in.
- Inclusiveness of races, sexes, conditions and classes of persons is not easy to accomplish. However the rewards from pursuing genuinely inclusive fellowship are well worth the struggle and the cost. Our experience shows that those ecumenical groups that are firmly inclusive are more likely to endure.
- Local groups that experience eucharistic and other leadership by women rapidly come to accept this as natural and necessary.
- Ecumenical ventures suffer overall more from local and regional neglect by denominations than from the outright hostility of the same. The ecumenical way ahead must continue to show particular concern to learn from *and to share with* church leaders at all levels.
- The experiences of the IEFs show how vulnerable all ecumenical endeavours are and how isolated ecumenical persons, both lay and clergy, are when their churches are not yet one body.

—If ecumenical eucharistic fellowship is to increase significantly, it must be *structurally, institutionally* provided for. Only then does it cease to be a matter of doing “something for them, if we have time and energy”.

This last point is possibly the most significant of all—it shows dramatically the shortcoming of the “intercommunion” concept. This means that the “one body” that church union seeks is a necessary component of the full experience of eucharistic sharing.

Bishop Newbigin’s statement on this question demonstrates its truth:

Communio in sacris cannot be—or rather ought not to be—severed from the mutual responsibilities of shared life. For Christians who live in separated bodies to practise occasional “intercommunion” and then to separate again and go their ways as if they were *not* members of one body is surely a profanation of the sacrament.¹

NOTE

1. Lesslie Newbigin, “What is a ‘Local Church Truly United’?” *In Each Place*, Geneva, WCC, 1977, p.23.

D. On the Way: Churches in Quest of Union

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR CHURCH UNION

LAURENCE A. CREEDY

This paper discusses the question of church union education, with particular reference to education at the congregational level, and even more specifically in relation to the activities of the Ghana Church Union Committee in this field.

The search for church union in Ghana: a long and complex process

The Committee began its work in 1957 and, although there has been great commitment towards the efforts for unity, there has so far been no happy ending. Representatives on the Committee come from the negotiating churches—initially the Anglican, Methodist and two Presbyterian—and report step by step to the governing bodies of their member churches, receiving endorsement for proposals or suggestions for improvement. Each governing body arranges consultations within the church and each church discusses the proposals with the presbyteries, districts, etc.

In 1960 the first major report was given by the Committee entitled “Our Approach to Church Unity”. In this our fundamental beliefs were stated, e.g. “We believe that God created ONE church... We are seeking union because we believe that the restoration of the visible unity of the church on earth is the will of God, and we believe that the Holy Spirit is leading us to resolve the differences which at present separate us.” This statement was accepted by the negotiating churches and has been fundamental to all subsequent work.

By 1965 the Committee had produced and revised the Proposed Basis of Union and begun work on the constitution. At the same time the first educational publication was produced (*Church Union in*

Ghana: Questions and Answers), which appeared in English and four Ghanaian languages and was widely distributed.

As a stage on the road to union, some of the churches in 1966 were "covenanting to unite", and after full consideration the Committee felt that the time had been reached in Ghana (when governing bodies had committed themselves to the principles of union as contained in the Basis of Union) for a "covenant" which individual congregations would commit themselves to.

Accordingly in 1967 the congregations of the negotiating churches were asked to study further the union proposals and to consider "affirming a sincere desire to enter into union" by means of a Solemn Declaration of Intention on Church Union. This declared that at the appropriate time the congregation would go into union and would in preparation for this "cooperate with our brethren in the other churches concerned". Thus not only study but also common action was called for from the churches.

At first the response to the Solemn Declaration was slow, indicating that congregations needed time to make up their minds about church union, but by 1972 between 75 and 100 percent of the congregations in the Methodist Church and the two Presbyterian Churches (but not the Anglican Church) had signed the Solemn Declaration.

During the years 1971-1974 the Church Union Committee completed the Proposals for Church Union in Ghana and produced further educational material.¹ The opening paragraphs of *Christian Unity in Your Town* summed up the situation under the heading "God's One Church and Our Separate Churches":

In God's purpose you and all the other Christians in your town are his one new family in Jesus Christ, with his one Holy Spirit at work in you all to give you new life and a fellowship that overcomes all human divisions. As the New Testament says (Eph. 4/4-5): "there is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism..." and we can add: one table of the Lord at which all gather, and one command to proclaim the one Gospel to all men.

But is that how you actually think of yourselves—as one people of God in the town? Must we not confess that we think too much of our—our—congregation (as separate from other congregations of other churches) and too little of the one fellowship in which our Lord Jesus Christ has bound us together by his death for us all? And that we think too much of *our* work, *our* chapel, *our* services, *our* funds, and too little of the one work of witness and service he has given us all? When pagans and Muslims look at us, do they not usually see us carrying on our work as quite separate churches, with only occasional joint services or meetings, usually friendly with one another but sometimes quarrelling over schools, each congre-

gation building up its own strength rather than drawing people into the one family of God?

The Proposals for Church Union in Ghana were completed in 1973 and published and presented to member churches in 1974. Sadly, at this point the Anglican Church withdrew by stages from the negotiations. The details of this withdrawal are not relevant to the present discussion but it should be noted that the other churches were determined to "go ahead at the command of our Lord" and have continued with the same proposals for a united church whose ministry includes bishops, and that there has been no querying of this episcopal element in the proposals.

Education towards union: a critical element in the union process

Reference has already been made to the publications, but something should be said about the methods used for church union education. The Committee has been responsible for the preparation of the education material but only on the understanding that it is primarily the responsibility of the negotiating churches themselves to prepare their members for church union.

In recent years, however, and particularly since the publication of the Proposals, the emphasis has been on *joint* education and action in preparation for union. In October 1974 the heads of the negotiating churches sent a joint letter to their ministers, calling for extensive and intensive cooperation among them:

So far our study, education and discussion have been mainly on a unilateral basis, each church acting on its own. Now we should act together. Churches in any given area should work together and organise joint study, joint discussion, joint church services, joint communion services, joint evangelism, joint meetings of the organisations in the churches—choirs, youth groups, women's fellowships. We should get to know one another, and the best way is to come together as frequently as possible and undertake joint action.

In the following year, 1975, the churches adopted the "Proposals for Joint Education and Action in Preparation for Church Union", including thirty suggestions on "Working Together at the Congregational Level". During 1976 and 1977, the heads of churches toured the country extensively together, speaking at joint conferences attended by almost all the ministers and a number of congregational lay leaders of the areas visited, distributing to all the congregations "A Message from the Heads of Churches to the Congregations of the Churches Negotiating Union".

Between 1974 and 1979 the member churches considered and voted on the Proposals, and by 1979 the governing bodies of the Methodist Church and the two Presbyterian Churches had agreed, by votes of 90 percent and 100 percent, to go into union. The Proposals empowered the Church Union Committee to complete the arrangements for the inauguration of the united church and in accordance with this decision the Committee at its meeting in October 1979 fixed the date of union for 4 January 1981.

At this point the story should be complete, but regrettably it is not so. Soon after the date for union had been fixed anguished cries were heard saying that the date was "too soon". As part of the whole union process, the Committee had, at its October 1979 meeting, established eight Diocesan Church Union Committees in Ghana's various regions, and so the Committee consulted these Diocesan Committees concerning a possible postponement of the inauguration for a period, in order to allow for further church union education.

The "technical" position is that the Church Union Committee is responsible for fixing the date for union, but in practice the date has to be fixed in consultation with the governing bodies of the uniting churches. It is enough to say at this point that the Committee is still trying to fix a date which all the three churches will accept.²

The events over the past two years have emphasized the need for an intensification of church union education and the Committee has responded by producing two more publications.³ In an attempt to get one of these publications—*On the Road to Church Union: Materials for Education and Action*—down to the grass-roots level, copies were supplied to church offices so that each minister and every congregation should have one, and in this connection the following points are relevant.

Our chairman states most forcefully the case for union:

God is one and Christ is one: and the community of believers in one God through the one Christ is one community. We confess and proclaim the one and only holy, universal, and apostolic church. The dividedness of the church has proved a major stumbling-block for God's gospel in its witness to the world. Today God is calling all his people to rediscover their original and essential oneness...

Unity is an entirely different matter from the cooperation of two or more separated churches. It is precisely the separatedness itself that is contrary to the true nature of the church and must be overcome. So only will the church be again the source and model of peace, concord, goodwill and reconciliation among men that God intends it to be. It does not make sense to say that we are spiritually united whilst in fact we remain visibly disunited.

The Rev. W.G.M. Brandful (formerly General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana) writes trenchantly: "Ghanaian Christians received the church in a broken and divided form, and the divisions between the major denominations are none of *our* making." And he tells the story of a Ghanaian family where three sisters eat together in the home but when they go away to different secondary schools—Anglican, Catholic and Methodist—and are confirmed there, they can no longer eat the bread and drink the wine together at the Lord's Table.

Our Committee works through a number of sub-committees and these include an active education and publicity sub-committee under whose guidance the following activities have been initiated or planned:

- seminars for ministers at diocesan level;
- seminars for lay leaders at diocesan level;
- a seminar (at national level) for leaders of youth organizations;
- talks by the heads of churches at the theological college (Trinity), some students of which also attend the church union committee meetings;
- seminars for women's organizations, beginning from Accra;
- seminars for heads and chaplains of church schools and colleges;
- education and action at the congregational level in accordance with the suggestions in *On the Road to Church Union*;
- an annual Church Union Week and Sunday;
- programmes over radio and television on the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.

At the moment we are seeking the appointment of an education and publicity secretary to "spearhead" these various activities.

What we have learned: some lessons for a difficult future

It is only right to state quite plainly that the Ghana Church Union Committee is perplexed and worried about the present position of church union in Ghana. Looking back over the years it is felt that the right things were attempted but regrettably without the desired success. What has gone wrong and what should now be done?

The following give some observations on the present situation:

1. The national votes of the churches on union were taken after consultation with regional bodies, so to that extent there is a general consensus for union.

2. However, it seems that the votes for union included both those with a genuine conviction on the issue and those who felt that union

was "the right thing to do" though without a real personal commitment to it.

3. The Church Union Committee and the national church leaders are firmly committed to church union as God's will for his church (see the 1960 statement and Prof. Baeta's ABC), but many throughout the churches still need to share this dynamic. Indeed there are still those who argue that John 17:21 speaks only of a spiritual unity, but one suspects that this is largely a "defence mechanism" on the part of those who are simply opposed to union.

4. Something that has militated against church union is the time that the negotiations have taken. A new generation has grown up which needs fresh education; and others have not taken union seriously because it has seemed distant rather than near.

5. There is, on the whole, good cooperation between the churches, for instance through the Christian Council, so that many ask what more is needed. One of the Diocesan Church Union Committees reported: "We observed that the masses have not at all understood the actual terms of the union, and only understood it for coordination, closer cooperation at funerals, harvests, anniversaries and such other church festivals." This is a case of the good being an enemy of the best.

6. And yet this working together, if rightly used, can so easily give us a firm basis for union. A number of our church leaders have been saying that what we really need is not so much education but practical cooperation, as listed on pages 27 and 28 of *On the Road to Church Union*. "Neighbouring congregations should start to work together irrespective of their denominations." In a well-known area the secretary of the local council of churches said: "We've been working together for ten years—we've no problem over church union."

7. The uniting churches are strong and their memberships are growing. All have been here since the first half of the last century. Both of these are grounds (whether consciously or unconsciously) for opposition to union. Again, most ministers are so busy with their (often numerous) congregations that they have little time for "extra" activities related to church union.

8. However the over-riding reason for opposition to union is probably the fear of change, fear of the future.

9. We are committed to working through the Diocesan Church Union Committees but at present some of them are inactive. This is a real problem which must still be overcome—especially in the light of what follows in the final point.

10. There is a nagging suspicion that the plea for more education is merely a ploy to defeat church union.

11. The crucial factor according to very many people is that too many ministers are "dragging their feet" over union. On seeing some of

our church union literature one youngish minister was heard to exclaim: "I don't believe in church union; don't disturb my peace of mind!" This is something that we have been fearing for a long time, and many would say that our present difficulties stem from the fact that ministers have not been giving the requisite church union education to their congregations. We are assured that where ministers have been giving the right lead there are seldom any serious problems but as one of our senior members said at our last committee meeting, "the problem is to get diligent faithful educators, and some ministers are not faithful". Unfortunately, too, worldly considerations are creeping into the church and one hears of ministers "jockeying for posts" in the united church.

Education: a need after the union process as well as before

One further subject should be referred to briefly. How can the process of education can be continued after union has taken place? I believe this is rather a subject for a united church than for those of us who are still uniting, but one or two simple observations can be made.

Reference has already been made to the setting up of diocesan church union committees. These are diocesan synod committees in embryo. Similarly plans are being made to establish church union committees for the future pastoral districts and these will continue into the united church as the district sessions.

In most of the dioceses and in many of the pastoral districts, there will be congregations that were formerly Methodist, Evangelical Presbyterian and Ghana Presbyterian. Thus in the united church the former traditions will have to work side by side so that the process of education will continue (as we see it) as ministers and members necessarily and naturally work together.

Indeed our Committee has had to remind itself on a number of occasions that it has to leave the united church to "work out its own salvation" and that it should not try to solve every problem before union. And in tackling Ghana's many problems our church leaders believe that the united church will be better equipped for this task than are the churches in separation.

An apology is perhaps necessary in that this paper was originally intended to be given in the hope that it would offer suggestions to other union committees but it is feared that the Ghana Church Union Committee is itself in need of help and advice from others, particularly from those churches which have already united.

NOTES

1. *Christian Unity in Your Town: a Call to Local Church Leaders*, 1971. A revised edition of the "Questions and Answers", 1972. *The Union of the Church in Ghana: an Urgent*

and a *Vital Issue* (a small but scholarly work), 1972. *Joint Church Work in New Areas*, 1972. *There's Only One Church*, by Christian Baeta and Colin Paton, 1974. The Ecumenical Movement, and Church Unions and Negotiations (a leaflet), 1974.

2. Editors' note: Since Mr Creedy's paper was prepared, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana has voted to discontinue union negotiations. Other parties, such as the Methodist Church, Ghana, have however reaffirmed their commitment to the process of church union in Ghana. The Ghana Church Union Committee has requested that its original parent body, the Ghana Christian Council, take over the search for church union in Ghana.
3. *The ABC of Church Union in Ghana*, C.G. Baeta, and *On the Road to Church Union: Materials for Education and Action*.

III

APPENDICES

CHURCH UNION NEGOTIATIONS: A NARRATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. General

We cannot cover completely the extensive bibliography on united and uniting churches. For general information refer to the *Oekumene Lexikon* (Krüger, Löser und Müller-Römheld, Verlag Lembeck/Verlag Knecht, Frankfurt am Main, 1983), in particular the following articles:

"Union (Unionskirchen)", R. Groscurth, columns 1192-1200.
"Unionsverhandlungen", G.F. Moede & R. Groscurth, columns 1200-1203.

For general background, and a helpful listing of church union achievements in the present century, one should consult:

Groscurth, R., *Kirchenunionen und Kirchengemeinschaft*, Verlag Lembeck, Frankfurt am Main, 1971.

An earlier, but still very valuable resource is:

Crow, Paul A., Jr., *The Ecumenical Movement in Bibliographical Outline*, Department of Faith and Order, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, New York, 1965. See section "VII. Church Unions and Union Schemes", pp.52-66.

In addition the Centro Pro Unione in Rome, a division of the Franciscan Society of the Atonement, publishes extremely valuable ecumenical materials. See in particular the recent and authoritative:

Puglisi, J. F. & Voicu, S. J., *A Bibliography of Inter-church and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues*, Centro Pro Unione, Rome, 1984.

2. Principles and practice of church union negotiations

The Faith and Order movement has had an active interest in church union negotiations for almost fifty years. Already the Edinburgh World Conference on Faith and Order (1937) commissioned a book "to review the course of object progress in Church unity since the Lausanne meeting of the World Conference of Faith and Order in 1927". This was:

Douglass, H. Paul, *A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity: 1927-1936*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1937.

In preparation for the Lund Conference in 1952 a comparable work was commissioned from a great church statesman:

Neill, Stephen, *Towards Church Union 1937-1952: a Survey of Approaches to Closer Union Among the Churches*, Faith and Order Commission Papers No. 11, 1952.

These works led to surveys of church union negotiations which appeared approximately every two years in *The Ecumenical Review*, journal of the World Council of Churches. These have been published as follows:

Nelson, J. Robert, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations", Vol. 6, 1953-54, pp.300-315.

Nelson, J. Robert, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations", Vol. 8, 1955-56, pp.76-93.

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Anon., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1969-1971", Vol. 24, 1972, pp.353-70.

Moede, Gerald F., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1971-1973", Vol. 26, 1974, pp.304-25.

Welsh, Robert W., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1973-1975", Vol. 28, 1976, pp.308-49.

Cranford, Stephen, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1975-1977", Vol. 30, 1978, pp.231-59.

Oussoren, A. H. Harry, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1977-1979", Vol. 32, 1980, pp.281-308.

Kinnamon, Michael, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1979-1981", Vol. 34, 1982, pp.361-90.

Best, Thomas F., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1981-1983", Vol. 36, 1984, pp.404-20.

More recently the surveys have also been reprinted in the important American ecumenical journal *Mid-Stream* as follows:

Welsh, Robert A., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1973-1975", *Mid-Stream*, 15, 1976, pp.271-312.

Cranford, Stephen, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1975-1977", *Mid-Stream*, 17, 1978, pp.278-310.

Oussoren, H., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations, 1977-1979", *Mid-Stream*, 19, 1980, pp.338-72.

Kinnamon, Michael K., "Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1979-1981", *Mid-Stream*, 22, 1983, pp.119-50.

Note also the summary of union work prepared for the first conference of united/uniting churches:

Handspicker, Meredith B., "Analytical Summary of Church Union Reports", *Mid-Stream*, 6, 1967, pp.63-76.

3. Conferences of united/uniting churches

One very important factor on the united/uniting churches scene has been a series of conferences focusing upon the unique interests, needs, problems and opportunities of these bodies. The first of these was the Consultation on Church Union Negotiations at Bossey (Switzerland) in 1967. The proceedings are reported in:

Mid-Stream, 6, 1967. The recommendations are given on pp.10-15, notes from discussions on pp.16-22.

The second meeting (the Conference on Church Union Negotiations) was held in Limuru, Kenya. See the report in:

Mid-Stream, 9, 1970. Statements and recommendations, pp.4-12, notes pp.13-33.

The third such meeting, the Consultation of United Churches and Committees on Union, was held in Toronto (Canada) 1975. Its results are available in:

Mid-Stream, 14, 1975, pp. 541-63, and in *What Unity Requires*, Faith and Order Paper No. 77, WCC, 1976, pp.18-29.

See also:

Growing Together into Unity, ed. Choan-Seng Song, Madras, Christian Literature Society, 1978, pp.13-17.

Vischer, Lukas, "The WCC and the Witness of United Churches", *Mid-Stream*, 14, 1975, pp. 471-86.

Crow, Paul A. Jr., "Church Union in Global Perspective", *Mid-Stream*, 14, 1975, pp.463-70.

Cressey, Martin H., "The Challenge of United Churches to World Confessional Families", *Mid-Stream*, 14, 1975, pp.510-24.

The Toronto Continuation Committee met in 1977, and produced "An Open Letter to United Churches and All Who Share Their Concerns—from the Toronto Continuation Committee". This is reprinted in:

Mid-Stream, 16, 1977, pp.443-49.

In 1981 followed the Fourth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches in Colombo, Sri Lanka. For this one should see:

Growing Towards Consensus and Commitment, Faith and Order Paper No. 110, WCC, 1981.

The recommendations are reprinted in:

Unity in Each Place... In All Places...: United Churches and the Christian World Communion, ed. Michael Kinnamon, Faith and Order Paper No. 118, WCC, 1983, pp.101-35.

In addition the following the especially important:

Cressey, Martin, "Church Union and the Visible Unity of Christ's Church", *Mid-Stream*, 21, 1982, pp.127-40.

Gassmann, Günther, "A Lutheran Response to the Colombo Report", and "A Lutheran Response to 'The Creative Edge'", *Unity...*, ed. Michael Kinnamon, Faith and Order Paper No. 118, WCC, 1983, pp.39-40.

4. The relation of united/uniting churches to bilateral discussions

The bilateral dialogues between Christian World Communions have become an increasingly important element of the union negotiations scene. The relation between bilateral discussions, and the united church movements which we have focused upon in this book, is a complex and important subject. Three forums on bilateral conversations have been held (Bossey, Switzerland, 1978; Geneva,

Switzerland, 1979; and Glion, Switzerland, 1980). The results of these meetings are available in:

The Three Reports of the Forum on Bilateral Conversations, Faith and Order Paper No. 107, WCC, 1981.

One should also consult:

Cressey, Martin H., "The Concept of Organic Unity as it has Motivated Church Unions", *Mid-Stream*, 17, 1978, pp.367-73.

Kinnamon, Michael, "United Churches and the Christian World. Communion", *Mid-Stream*, 22, 1983, pp.10-22.

An important consultation in Salamanca, "Concepts of Unity and Models of Union", addressed the question of the relationship between united churches and the bilaterals. See papers and reports in:

The Ecumenical Review, Vol. 26, 1974, esp. pp. 291-303.

This material is also available in:

What Kind of Unity?, Faith and Order Paper No. 69, WCC 1974, see especially pp.119-31.

5. The relation of united churches to individual world confessional families

For this see the following:

"Meeting of Representatives from the Colombo Consultation of United Churches and the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, February 1983", in *Unity...*, Faith and Order Paper No. 118, WCC, 1983, pp. 43-56.

"Meeting of Representatives from the Colombo Consultation of United Churches and Members of Orthodox Churches, February 1983", *Unity...*, Faith and Order Paper No. 118, WCC, 1983, pp. 67-100.

6. Additional

Often non-theological factors are critical to union discussions, and to the life of united churches themselves. On this see:

"Nicht-Theologische Faktoren", G. Gassmann, *Oekumene Lexikon*, 1983, columns 857-859.

Finally, one should be confronted by the challenge posed by Bonino in his penetrating essay:

Bonino, José Miguez, "A Latin American Attempt to Locate the Question of Unity", in *What Kind of Unity*, Faith and Order Paper No. 69, 1974, pp.51-64.

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